



**GENDER, CLASS AND RACE IN  
PEARL S. BUCK'S SELECT NOVELS**

**ABSTRACT  
THESIS**

**SUBMITTED FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**IN  
ENGLISH**

**BY**

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# Abstract

## Introduction

The objective of this study is to find out how human division and categorisation result in hierarchy with reference to Pearl S. Buck's novels. The main categories that the study concerns are *gender, class and race*. The first question that is probed is whether suspending hierarchical categorisation is possible. The 'mental schemes' have to be revised in order to make hierarchy and its by-product, human disdain a thing of past. The task is monumental and yet necessary. The novels concerned reveal that the problem is entrenched deeply in the human mind. Pearl S. Buck, taking cognizance of the problem, proves that the change is to be brought about by pragmatic thinking. With her efforts to uplift mixed race children, she makes immense effort to sensitise people vis-a-vis the power disequilibrium in the human world. Taking stock of the global issues as well as the problems at the domestic level in America at the time of the two world wars, she condemns fascist trends that the whole world followed. The nations are gendered, classed and racialised to justify the power equation at a global level. At a microcosmic level, the characters in her fictive world seem to be suffering from the same fate. The present study sees the microcosmic as well as macrocosmic level problems that arise due to gender, class and race based inequality and how they are manifest in the novels concerned.

## Gender

From sex to gender and back again, this section tries to read that both the terms assume meanings and implications that lead to the conclusion that sex and gender both are social constructs. Sex is given meaning more than mere biology. In the content meaning gender and container meaning gender rubric, there emerges a problem that the cast of sex is fixed and hence will mould the content i.e. gender accordingly. The analyses of the novels reveal that gender is a problem acquiring a magnitude that leaves no one unaffected. Appropriating Bordieu's forms of capital, it is discussed that the women are transacted as objects and considered repositories of economic, cultural and social capital. Nevertheless, exceptions can be found and a shift can be perceived in women's position to be witnessed in Pearl S. Buck's novels. With characters like Tsu Hzi, the Emperor, Madame Liang, an entrepreneur, Madame Wu trying to achieve transcendence, Joan an independent woman taking care of others, Josui trying to decrease her level of jeopardy from double to single, based on sex and race, to sex only, Pearl S. Buck traces an exception and a shift in the position of women. The study found out that in Pearl S. Buck's novels, patriarchy has different manifestations: Fascist, Feudal, Capitalist and Religious. The novels evidence them at a thematic level, the underlying base being utilitarian patriarchy.

## Class

The study discovered that Pearl S. Buck is most ambiguous in the matter of class. She is an American in her conviction in hard work and diligence as a key to

success. At the same time she does not justify the deprivation of the masses. She tries to steer clear of a Communist stance. *The Good Earth* does not focus on class struggle. It is the story of a heathen Chinese peasant who seems to be following Protestant Ethics to rise up into a feudal lord himself. Nevertheless, contrapuntal reading traces the concatenating situations justifiably paving the way to the Revolution in China. Some of her favoured though minor characters are revolutionary in spirit and behaviour. Norman Linley and Francis seem to have leftist inclination. Pearl S. Buck's gamut of work includes various incarnations of classed societies: feudal, capitalist including a tongue-in-cheek discussion of democratic and communist. In the American context, her novels basically concern with the bourgeois society. She traces the change of the form of society from feudalist to capitalist. Her novels discuss class mobility or class shift in the fates of individuals. The changes take place due to chance as well as individual enterprise and both examples are evidenced in her novels. She discusses power dynamics among individual societies as well as nations. Her novels take stock of international situation and try to analyse the impact of Imperial power struggle.

## **Race**

Race, another category to cause power disequilibrium, is an important concern in Pearl S. Buck's fiction. The term is invalidated before discussion of the novels. The definition of race was necessitated in 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the transatlantic slave trade with an albocratic and Eurocentric purpose. The monogenists, polygenists all mostly gave a justification of hierarchy leading to



ethnopsychology. The mutual fertility of all the people used to refute the racist-hierarchists' claim, also gave rise to a big problem of the War time. At a time when racism was at its peak due to the fact that Asian and White powers were pitted against each other, miscegenation, inter racial marriage and the mixed race children became a big problem. Pearl S. Buck's novels not only exemplify such problems but also condemn the irrational laws and irresponsible people who create such problems. It was discovered that the novels also offer solutions. There are characters that are conscientious and sensitive (mostly women) who, in turn, sensitise others. The novels give assimilation as well as rainbow paradigms for the different races scattered around the world. For the Jews, the assimilation in the Chinese people is suggested which can be read as anti-Semitism also. Nevertheless, Pearl S. Buck proves to be a great admirer of the Jews. The best and most attractive and talented characters in her novels are the Jews. Both clannish as well as broadminded characters among American and Chinese people her fiction. Her approach to mixed race children is eugenic and the solution suggested is pragmatic morality at individual level.

## **Conclusion**

Power-obsession, power-delusion, power-disequilibrium and power deficiency lead to create the biggest problems in the human world. Pearl S. Buck's novels evidence the issues mostly with reference to gender and race problems. Gender, race and class are the categories that give rise to human disdain. Pearl S. Buck's oeuvre is a contribution to the ongoing effort to understand and analyse the conflicts and minimise the instances of injustice and marginalisation. The

monumental task is the responsibility of the whole society. Pearl S. Buck is one of the stepping stones, which contribute to the building of a new way of thinking, a fresh outlook and a fresh perspective to look at the gender, class and race inequities.



# **GENDER, CLASS AND RACE IN PEARL S. BUCK'S SELECT NOVELS**

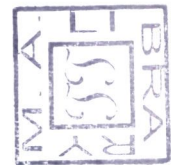
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*For Rayyan . . .*

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## Preface

The topic of research “Gender, Class and Race in Pearl S. Buck’s Select Novels” elaborates the perspective from which Pearl S. Buck’s novels are to be read and analyzed. The simple reason why her fiction seems to be more valuable for thematic readings rather than technical analysis is very obvious: it is that she has never been considered to be a diligent stylist, always narrating with an ease of style what happens inwardly or outwardly in the arena of her fiction. The pragmatic aspect of the sociological concerns I am going to discuss is a prominent thematic focus in Pearl S. Buck’s novels. I chose to talk about the writer concerned for the simple reason that she is an important twentieth century American writer. The fact that Pearl S. Buck’s fiction has not been much critiqued provides me with one more incentive that I am one among the few steps so far taken towards the analysis of her fiction.

Gender, class and race are important sociological concerns for any thinking mind. To make the study intersectional and to read the fiction as a social discourse that reflects a particular social background are my objectives. Not all fiction can be treated as social document: yet it is a medium that reveals and betrays much about the writer’s conscious as well as unconscious intentions and the human world that provides it with the raw material. These social dimensions are much discussed, questioned and problematised in anthropological, social, psychological, religious and even scientific discourses. Though multiple readings of the writer concerned is possible, as the appendix to this thesis proves, I would prefer that the following critique has more allegiance to a constructionist



approach vis-a-vis the topic of human divide, categorization and hierarchisation based on gender, class and race. The sole reason is just that a constructionist approach is progressive and contributes to the evolution of the human society. This work is divided into five chapters. In the first chapter, Introduction, I would try to look at the three sociological concerns, Gender, Class and Race, and their relevance in the study of literature. The following chapters entitled Gender, Class and Race discuss the basic meanings, definitions and implications these sociological dimensions have, followed by explications and analyses of Pearl S. Buck's novels.

I have formatted the thesis according to OWL's MLA 2009 Formatting and Style Guide 7<sup>th</sup> Edition.

## *Introduction*

*Academics . . . specialize in the crime of representing the personal as objective truth. Sometimes, they're just deeply confused as to which is which; more often, they put the pursuit of knowledge through a sanitizing process which strips it of its most vital and interesting aspect - where it came from, just how it is mediated by the knower's own experience and rooting in the material social world. (Oakley 2)*

## Introduction

Reading Literature cannot be an ivory tower perusal of text, as a venture unrelated and unconcerned with the source of raw material used in the process of production. How its production takes place and how this product is then used, interpreted and appropriated by the reader also fall under the scrutiny of the critic-reader. Human society and its history inform the writer and literature and despite all its aesthetic claims of universal beauty and appeal, literature cannot possibly avoid showing temporal and spatial glimpses. It is a kind of a social document, reflecting in a variety of degrees the ethos and milieu of its time and place.

Literature is a social discourse that writes not only as a simple record of human history or an expression of human mind; it is rather an interactive mode which expresses the interplay of ideas that create and are created by history which creates and is created by human mind. The construction of reality is a process that is concomitant and commensurate with the complex nature of human evolution which is based on species-specific latent powers. Homo sapiens sense and perceive and then move on to name. Language is the naming or codification system that captures and creates reality. Or the world we inhabit would have been just a nebula. In the process of getting hold of what surrounds, human perception tends to divide, separate and categorise. And then it tends to hierarchies, for the gravity demands the notions of up and down and sun and its absence demand the notions of light and dark. The reason is that there is no existence in the ordinary sense without gravity and sun. Hence division and

hierarchy inform and shape ordinary human cognitions. They facilitate, intervene and obstruct the making of knowledge, in the way social agents see, speak and act and thereby construct knowledge and reality. Social agents implement “cognitive structures” constructed by cognitive faculty in “the practical knowledge of the social world”. The construction of reality in turn constructs the social agents. What seems to be subjective was earlier an objective social structure. The cognitive structures are internalised and ‘embodied’ social structures in the social agents that are part of their practical knowledge, common-sense, working at an unconscious level, implementing ‘classificatory schemes’. “The objective divisions’ (gender, social classes, age groups, races etc) produce ‘classificatory schemes . . . historical schemes of perception and appreciation” (Bourdieu, *Distinctions*).

Doing away with the classificatory schemes or suspending hierarchy as desired by Christine Delphy (67) definitely demands a broader ken and horizon than what human beings ordinarily use. It demands stretching their minds to a function of literature that Shelley talks about without meaning it too literally in *Defence of Poetry* (Daiches 121). The possibility of such iconoclasm requires much discussion, debate and effort. However, this is what progressive constructionists dream of and pin their hopes onto.

The production of schemes, mental or historical, achieves a system that is favourable for some and unfavourable for others, puts some in an advantageous while others in a disadvantageous position. The structure of the social world is founded on such schemes leading to various unequal categorisations or classifications. In the categories that are unequal, the more equal is more

privileged and less equal is less privileged. All the forms of social discourses even the ones that demand conscious effort, exercise and application of mind (read subjectivity) including literature are laden with schemes that produce division and hierarchy. Thus, the understanding of categories, divisions and hierarchies, that human mind can think of, is essential to devise ways to relegate them to what Andrea Dworkin calls “anthropological curiosities” (qtd. in Ruthven 30) and to understand literature that may or may not try to subvert them.

Gender, class and race are some important categories that are used in the social and sociological discourses to name, know and understand the variety in human species. Gender and race are categories that are essentially physiognomy and biology based. Class is, in the majority of cases, an offshoot and in exceptional and extraordinary situations exclusive of the first two. Since such naming means hierarchy, with advantage and prominence of some and disadvantage and neglect of others, it causes trouble and keeps the social world in a state of struggle and turmoil at varying magnitude in different times and spaces. The problematisation starts with psychologisation and rationalisation of power-positioning of people and persons on the basis of the human biological or socio-historical variety. Prominence and precedence and the lack thereof in the social agents are explained and reasoned with the help of mythology, theology, metaphysics, psychology and the medical sciences also. In the normative explanations, the prominent and powerful, by the authority of the norm and centre, marginalise, corner, disarm and ‘other’ the soft targets or the defenceless. Redeemingly, the centre of authority seems to be in a state of flux and there are

always circle beyond circles around the centre that are struggling to move towards the more advantageous position of authority. The centre is always under the threat from the peripheral; the norm from the deviation and the 'I' from the other. Social world is never devoid of drama and action, which provides the basis of myriad forms of social discourse. Action is the foundation of drama and is enacted by the agents (Aristotle *Poetics*). The genre of fiction, a much younger progeny of drama or *Poesie*, in the process of literary evolution, relates much directly with the agent and action in the arena of social world.

The genre of fiction derives its material from the human world especially the social world as its source, relatively, more directly than any other literary genre. The election, rejection, variation, innovation and experimentation of the form and content in no way eliminate the inevitability of the representation, reflection or at least seepage of what can be called 'classificatory schemes', 'forms of classification', 'mental structures' 'symbolic forms' or 'historical schemes of perception' (Bordieu 1984). Reading, by yielding to the implied author (Rawling 2006), or a contrapuntal attempt trying to get hold of the hidden writer or the suffocated voices in the text reveal many perspectives that involve many heard voices or unheard whispers related to sociological concerns based on division and hierarchy. In this work, I have taken up these three sociological concerns namely gender, class and race, wherefrom I try to read and analyse the fiction of the writer concerned.

Though, at the onset of the work, I had realised that Pearl S. Buck is not the only author who talks of these social dimensions. Moreover, I am among a

multitude of writers who are working to analyse literature or any text to look at the fabric of human societies with special reference to the issues as gender, race and class. So much is written for the diffident disadvantaged group in gender, class and race that my attempt seems puny. Oakley justifies the shock felt by Myrdal and Virginia Woolf at the amount of intellectual energy spent on the issues of women, and Negroes. It should have moved mountains.

The main reason it hadn't was because of the way the problem had been conceptualized: as belonging to Black people rather than white society. White Americans defined the economic and social position of Negroes and then wondered why they tended to behave differently. In just the same way, gender equality has been seen as a problem of, and for, women, and not for, men, or of the social system as a whole. (Oakley 2)

There is always a need to work in this area, related with not only a segment of the society but rather the society as a whole. Especially in the modern world shrunk into a global hut under the influence of information technology, whatever happens in the East affects the West and vice versa. Pearl S. Buck wrote in an era that was witnessing the shrinking of the world not only under the influence of technology but also under the effect of Nietzschean hawkishness as a driving force on both sides of the globe. The problems are of a global magnitude. Here is an attempt to see what Pearl S. Buck with her twin loyalties to the East as well as to the West and mostly to both the sides of any case, was trying to say especially in her fictive writings.

The aim here is to focus on these three social dimensions and their inter-relatedness and difference in sentiments and sensitivity with which they are treated in the fictive works of Pearl S. Buck which are little less direct and assertive than her non-fiction writings.

The ensuing discussion in three different chapters entitled gender, class and race are related with each other and the discussion of these overlaps while I try to analyse and explicate the novels of the writer concerned. I am trying to discuss them in separate chapters, however, with no pretention to make them water-tight compartments. The discussion is founded on the complexity of human social world. Relativity and relation are inevitable and indispensable, which leads to complexity. First, it should be considered that the questions, discussions and arguments based on differences between “women and men, races and ethnicities and classes, straights and gays” all have valid points which undermine the “simplistic claims of a universal humanity”. And a further and more comprehensive analysis discloses that “underlying distinctive forms of gender, race, and class discrimination may also—and this is meant as a both/rather than either/or statement about commonalities and differences—be similar sentiments that arise when human beings show disdain for the characteristics, be they gendered, racialised, or class-based” (Chancer and Watkins 3). It is obvious that the commonalities and differences in the dialectics of division and hierarchy based on human tendency to devalue deride and turn the difference of characteristics in the fellow humans into their marginality and jeopardy may or



may not be a matter of mutual sympathy. The black and the feminists and the workers can easily be found pitted against each other.

The commonalities and differences are as important as the fact that the sensitivity level and consciousness to different issues varies from individual to individual. A person's concern in one area may not translate into sensitivity in another social issue. The basic idea is that pride, prejudice and bias can be based on one or two or all kinds of dimensions mentioned or omitted in this discussion. It depends on how far one can go or dig or limit or split-hair to make the practical knowledge of our world. From another perspective, a person 'othered' and marginalised due to 'human disdain' (Chancer and Watkins 3) for features based on gender, class and race, can have one or more than one such feature and may fall in double or multiple jeopardy. Pearl S. Buck's fiction is replete with such examples. There are characters and people suffering from power-delusion, power-obsession as well as power-deficiency due to one or multiple causes. Not only individuals but countries and nations are included in her canvass of writing. But before taking the plunge into the discussion of her novels, I would like to talk about a few basic points that I subscribe to, in the coming pages.

Though, multiple readings of the novelist concerned are viable, I have mostly interpreted her works with a bias for the second set of concepts in an adaptation of Chancer and Watkins set of concepts given at the onset of discussion about the three sociological issues:

1. Determinism/essentialism versus social constructionism
2. Universalism versus cultural relativism/historical specificity

### 3. Reductionism/autonomy versus complexity

4. Neat or simplistic stratification versus overlapping and multiple power or/and powerless positioning (Chancer and Watkins 3).

In the above appropriation of Chancer and Watkins, I have just added the last point.

In the following discussion, the postulates of essentialism or determinism are not given as much importance as those of social constructionism. The bias is based on a simple reason that social constructionism is progressive and hopeful for the irksome injustices some members of the society suffer from. Tracing back to the work of William Isaac Thomas and the Chicago sociologists, as well as the phenomenological sociologists and philosophers such as Alfred Schutz, the term 'constructionism' formally entered the sociological vocabulary through Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966), a treatise on the sociology of knowledge, which attempts an innovative synthesis of the ideas of Émile Durkheim and George Herbert Mead. For Berger and Luckmann, the basic features of social order are captured in the principle that 'Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality' (Marshall 1998). With a constructionist approach, it is easier to understand the evolution of humankind, with its vicissitudes that make or unmake groups and people. The difference between explaining the way people are, including their psychology and socio-economic situation as a dynamic and constantly evolving existence, and attaching static value to it adds or curtails latitude, broad vision and understanding and thus

makes all the difference. In short, a constructionist approach seems more progressive and therefore is being preferred in the following discussion.

Since the writer concerned has seen the social tapestry of America and Asia, not as an outsider but by living there, not only among the upper class but also with the 'amahs' ("Works of Pearl S. Buck: The Good Earth."), she is in a position to distinguish the culture and history specific uniqueness from the universal aspect of human life. In the following chapters, I have tried to see and interpret her oeuvre with a view to see the cultural and historical differences as well as similarities in the positions of gender, class and racial individuals and groups.

The complexity of the social fabric in any given culture and society does not allow any sweeping generalisation about unequal power distribution among the social members. It is this complexity that Marx talks about, in *Capital*, which rules out reductionism of any form of human-subjugation to the responsibility of Capitalism.

. . . the number and extent of his [labourer's] so-called necessary wants, as also the modes of satisfying them, are themselves the product of *historical development*, and depend therefore to a great extent on the degree of *civilization* of a country, more particularly on the *conditions* under which, and consequently on the habits and degree of comfort in which, the class of free labourers has been formed. In contradistinction therefore to the case of other commodities, there enters into the determination of the value of

labour-power a *historical and moral element*. Nevertheless, in a given *country*, at a given *period*, the average quantity of the means of subsistence necessary for the labourer is practically known.  
(emphasis added) (Marx 1867)

It needs to be remembered that variables like 'historical development', 'country' and 'period' are as much important as the broadly condemned oppressive systems like patriarchy, capitalism, racism and apartheid, defying any attempt to universalise any social problem. It means that Capitalism is an inheritor and not a progenitor of the traditions that decide that men and not women will worship gods and claim access to power thereby (Rubin 537). Therefore, cultural relativity should be taken into account for a better and more comprehensive understanding of society.

I have tried to analyse the three dimensions that lead to stratification of the social members centrifugally, with power being in the centre most intensely, and diluting gradually as one moves farther in the outer circles. I have tried to explain jeopardy of social members on singular, double and multiple bases. The more one goes down and outward in the following social analysis, the more would be the chances of marginalisation and jeopardisation. In this model of stratification, the downward and outward hierarchisation, though, simplistic may account for instances of subjugation on the bases of gender, race and class, with the situation, by the law of average, getting graver as one moves downward; nevertheless, some scope of complexity, exceptions and accidents, defiant of the above-mentioned structure needs to be given concession.

White men to white women

White bourgeois men vis-a-vis white bourgeois women

White bourgeois men and women vis-a-vis dark bourgeois men and  
women

White bourgeois women vis-a-vis dark working class men and women

Dark bourgeois men vis-a-vis dark bourgeois women

Dark bourgeois men vis-a-vis dark working class men and women

Dark bourgeois women vis-a-vis dark working class women

Dark working class men vis-a-vis dark working class women

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Literature is a word derived from the Latin *littera* meaning letter. In common early English, *Litterature* simply meant literacy or ability to read and write (Day 15). From the late nineteenth century it started accumulating the meaning of artistic beauty and excellence and by the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it came to imply creative or imaginative writing that was earlier denoted by *Poesie*. The idea of aesthetic excellence and what is included in and excluded from the aesthetic circle are matters not so clear and absolute. As Bordieu maintains that social agents try hard to train themselves to like a particular kind of music or literature to enter the world of the elitists who claim to patent aesthetic judgement exclusively (Bordieu, *Distinctions*). We may become connoisseurs or end up being mere phoney dilettantes, while unconsciously craving for what we really like as a human child in the simplest and unprocessed forms. This may explain the difference between classes among the critics, whose

majority belongs or would like to belong to the first category. The gap is between the two based on 'classificatory schemes' that are expressed through 'oppositions' and by being fixed into 'polar positions'. They "underlie the 'purest' ethical or aesthetic judgements, with their high or low sentiments, their facile or difficult notions of beauty, their light or heavy styles etc . . . while euphemizing itself to the point of misrecognizability" (Bordieu, *Distinctions*). The fate of the high-browed critics can be 'misrecognizability' as they cannot be satisfied until the popular notions get polarised into the other extreme notions of aesthetic judgement.

Therefore, not all the people with a flair for writing and especially writing fiction can make a haloed niche in the canons of writing after getting through the scanner and scrutiny of the high-browed art/literary critics. Some of them are sieved out for lack of 'artistic excellence'. Pearl S. Buck is one such thespian writer who could gain popularity the world over but could not be welcomed in the American literary fraternity without a sense of discomfiture.

Pearl Sydenstricker Buck, despite her Nobel and Pulitzer prizes, is considered to be a literary light weight, a writer supposedly popular with the housewives. This is partially due to her belief in a simple Biblical narrative and a preference of rather "episodic plots" to "complex structures". Her famous biographer, Peter Conn declares that "she was not a felicitous stylist and she displayed a taste for formulaic phrases" (xvii). The fact that her principal subjects are women and China or Asia instead of Europe and America in which her target language-group, people of European descent, would have been interested, also

did not endear her to the American, predominantly male, literary critics. Her being away from the main literary scene in America where her target audience was, in the beginning of her career, may also have added to her disadvantage. Or was it her isolation from the mainstream macho culture that a young nation like America loved so much? Nevertheless, much to the chagrin of high-browed literary critics, Pearl S. Buck became a Nobel laureate in literature (with Toni Morrison, she is one of the only two American women Nobel laureates in Literature). In 1932, she won Pulitzer Prize for *The Good Earth* which is considered to be her magnum opus and was given Howells Medal by the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1935. Having written over seventy books, fifteen of which have been Book-of-the-Month club selections, Pearl S. Buck seems to have spent most of her time in life with a pen in her hand. This image is only broken when one looks at her life more closely especially as depicted by her famous, diligent, comprehensive biographer Peter Conn by actively being involved in activities for the uplift of the helpless and especially the most helpless and needy, the mixed race children. Her literary oeuvre covers almost all genres of writing: novels, short stories, plays, biography, autobiography, translations (from the Chinese), children's literature, essays in journalism and poetry. She was elected to the national Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, and was conferred on a dozen of honorary degrees. Buck's popularity reached far and wide and she is one of the most read and perhaps the most translated writer in English. Such a level of popularity, cutting across the borders of language, cultures and nations, definitely

warrants and merits a more serious interpretation of her art and an artless appraisal of her real calibre than what she has been accorded so far.

I often received a look of surprise when I told people that I am writing my thesis on Pearl S. Buck. Why Pearl S. Buck? Why not other Nobel laureates or writers with better social capital like Gabriel Garcia Marquez, William Faulkner or the likes? Was she not giving me much opportunity for mental acrobatics that may warrant my placement with the 'high-browed clan'? I definitely cannot afford to steer away from serious intellection, ratiocination and abstraction that are the indispensable part of academics. Can I, an academe, afford to avoid academicism? Is she not a "too risky an investment" (Conn xii). Nevertheless, I decided to take the plunge. I fail to understand why she is treated as a literary pariah. And when I see her marginalisation from the American literary canon as compared to her international popularity, it amazes me all the more how American literati could keep her banished from the mainstream American fiction writers. Was it anxiety of a new nation like America to feel that what is liked by the Tom, Dick and Harries of the world ought to be considered below their taste and notice. I was surprised how popular literary history books throw her into an inexplicable oblivion. I elect to critique her fiction, partially because that I had been reading her for quite a long time, and more importantly because I feel that she is a writer who deserves much more attention for her belief in talking of various international issues in the tone of simple and nonchalant realism. She believes in a synthesis between thoughts and action, denounced hypocrisy, and exposes the



false pretensions of democracy of a mighty nation like America that she belongs to. No wonder she is pushed into the corner.

Pearl S. Buck cared about what the popular style and fashion of writing fiction was in the literary circle as little as she cared about her sartorial style. She avoided fripperies and embellishments in her writings in the same manner as she refused boxing in her tummy with a corset despite being jeered at by her college friends at Randolph-Macon.

At a time when the entire world was going berserk and asunder in a hawkish atmosphere of will to power, with America too joining the band wagon to grab the space soon to be evacuated by the British Empire that seemed to have reached over the hill, Pearl voiced her concern for the entire hapless common humanity. When the elephants fight, the grass suffers. So she especially concerned herself with the causes of the marginalised and the devoiced, namely women, children and the black.

In her novels, Pearl S. Buck espouses the cause of the underprivileged. Hers is an important voice to be paid attention to, as she looks at the problem of marginalisation not only at microcosmic but also at macrocosmic levels. Her world vision is an outcome of her myriad experiences and their conversion into a unified sensibility, that she had attained, while living in Asia and travelling to various countries in Asia and Europe, finally to settle down in the country where she was born. Born into a missionary family who had dedicated their lives to save the heathen souls of the Chinese, she found herself living far away from her place of birth and country of origin.

Pearl S. Buck basically wrote for bread and butter. She resolved to begin writing "because of her family's financial difficulties" ("Buck, Pearl S."). Thus, it can well be explained why she wrote so prolifically. And her success should be read as a result of her sheer talent.

Pearl S. Buck was a globe trotter as she travelled with her family during its furloughs. She travelled trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific and observed much more in the world than what her contemporary compatriots saw. Her world view is in a rare way, more comprehensive and compendious. As a woman she provided a fresh perspective based on rational and sympathetic thinking about the world at a time when rational thinking was in a short supply and was the greatest requirement of the day. Her fiction talks about the world political situation and its effects on the lives of individuals at a time when World Wars and their effects were looming large on the world horizon. The Burmese war of Independence against the Japanese and white invader-colonizers, the Chinese peasantry and the elite and the bourgeoisie, the children of war, the American feudal and bourgeois society, the Abolitionist war between North and South America; all captured her attention and urged her to write fiction about them. The story-teller in her is naturally endowed, attracting the international audience with her simple and yet interesting voice.

There is a danger in being simple, linear and direct. Something which does not seem to leave much scope for aesthetic and intellectual acrobatics often goes neglected by us. To us, less complex means less worthy of attention. Therefore, simplicity of style sometimes becomes a hindrance in the real estimate of a

writer. Nevertheless, profundity and sensitivity of thought, relevance of the subject-matter and seriousness of the content cannot be slighted for the lack of opacity, complexity or the piece of tinsel that must envelop the direct view of the object. I do not intend to say that the writer concerned never earned accolade for her art of novel writing. She sometimes earned excellent reviews and did it the best under the pseudonym John Sedges.

Her style of writing is simple and is based on a chronological story-telling, a linear development of plot. But so far as the high-browed critics' allegation that the psychological complexity and profundity is missing in Pearl S. Buck is concerned, I find it to be a case of a priori snobbish judgement. If it is not so, then how can she earn more accolades when she wrote under the pseudonym John Sedges. Her fiction about America was received well because of the fact that people could find American colour and flavour only in the novels written by a male American with American experience of a lifetime at disposal, which Pearl S. Buck's real name disclaimed.

Pearl S. Buck described herself as "culturally bifocal" (Conn), an apt metaphor for her trans-nationalism: she could speak of America as well China as her own country. She could easily shift her optical lenses from Chinese to American, from Asian to European and vice versa with ease and felicity. Having learnt to speak Chinese perhaps before she could speak English, she could speak and write with an equal and tender sympathy for the orient as well as the occident. In her speech at Pearl S. Buck Foundation, September 1, 1994, with "affectionate irony" (Conn Xiii), Tony Morrison highlights the most important

merit in Buck: "she misled me" Morrison says, "and made me feel that all writers wrote sympathetically, empathetically, honestly and forthrightly about other cultures" (qtd. in Conn Xiii).

Much fascinated by Pearl S. Buck's indefatigable spirit, her extraordinary achievements in life not only as a writer but also as an activist, her unabashed recount of what is universal and natural and yet much neglected, Elizabeth J. Lipscomb speaks in the tone of admiration and awe:

She was the first American woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, breaking new ground with her ethnic characters and honest depictions of hitherto taboo subjects, such as childbirth, while expanding the frontiers of established genres, such as biography. As a humanitarian, she publicly and pragmatically addressed the problems of children handicapped by birth defects or mixed race and inspired others to do the same. As an unofficial diplomat, she introduced Americans to Asia through her writings and through the organizations she founded to improve East-West relations, and even influenced government initiatives. Finally, her insights about racism, scientific ethics, and sexism make her a forerunner of the civil rights, antinuclear, and feminist movements. Indeed, in many respects, Buck is still so far ahead of her time that these movements have not caught up with her. Certainly there are more eminent writers, humanitarians, diplomats, disarmament experts, civil rights advocates, and feminists, but no one individual,

male or female, comes to mind who has accomplished so much in so many significant areas. (Lipscomb)

Pearl S. Buck was a regular contributor to *Crisis*, the magazine of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People. She discussed American racism in *American Argument* which she co-authored with Eslanda Robeson. She also wrote for *Opportunity*, published by the National Urban League, since the time she moved back to America in the year 1934. She was a supporter of Equal Rights Amendment for women during the 1930s and 1940s while some major women's groups opposed it. She was more of a radical feminist in supporting birth control and eulogising her friend Margret Sanger as one of the most courageous women of her time and a crusader for justice. Her fiction as well short fiction along with her essays and her social activities always raised unsettling questions about racial, class and sexual injustices. She was so vocal about the devoiced and marginalised lot of women, African-American and the Amerasian, often voicing a wish for an egalitarian society and expressing sympathy for the working-class uprising in slippages that she came under the scrutiny of FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover as early as 1937. The thespian writer antagonised the right wing people with her civil rights efforts, the Left with her anti-communism diatribes and male critics in general for being a woman writer earning perhaps more than they did and at the time of the Depression of 1930s.

In the 1950s, she came under scrutiny in the McCarthy-era United States as an alleged communist sympathizer, while at the same time in China she was

condemned as a running dog of imperialism because of her anti-communist statements (Melvin).

Quite unsure of her art of fiction writing, under the influence of her Chinese tutor and missionary background that considered anything short of Evangelism below dignity and her upbringing in a paternal patriarchal set-up, Pearl S. Buck found her way to fame from the nook of a room sliced off her modest marital dwelling. It is really surprising, yet explainable, that on account of factors, like her womanhood, her expatriation, her tutelage under Kung, and her belief in simplicity of style and manner, she herself remained unsure and diffident about an art that brought her laurels and gave her confidence to hold her head high in the society and look into the eyes of the world which looked away from the gaze of a strong woman.

Her novels are often in a state of oscillation of sympathy between extreme ranges of experience. As she writes about not only exiled individualistic women characters like her mother who was caught between the beauty of Earth and an eternal wait for any Heavenly sign to appear and commend her sacrifices, but also about men like her father who are more of an innocent angel lacking practical knowledge of the world around and getting solace by a strict and literal interpretation of his guiding light, the Bible. She creates characters as selfishly (and blamelessly too) individualistic as Madame Liang and Wang Lung (*The Good Earth*) as well as well-meaning and affectionate as Laura (*The New Year*), O-Lan (*The Good Earth*) Kit (*Other Gods*) and Marry and Joan (*The Time is Noon*):

The American novel tends to rest in contradictions and among extreme ranges of experience. When it attempts to resolve contradiction, it does so in oblique, morally equivocal ways. (Chase 1)

Pearl S. Buck's fiction presents a world that is not governed by strict and stringent laws of morality, as a result of which the reader finds her/himself in a state of suspension of judgement. In her there is no attempt to reconcile the contradictions. Thematically her novels are based on "extreme ranges of experiences". As her ken traverses and sees what lies on both the sides of the Pacific, and avoids a common folly of eccentricity which is common in the writers suffering from deficiency in sympathy and empathy. Her approach to the adopted country of her parents with which she associated bitter-sweet memories of childhood shows clarity of vision and attitude that are difficult to be found among writers whose oeuvre hinge on a Eurocentric world view. She is 'bifocal' not only culturally but also gender, colour and ideology wise. Her approach to the vision of an ideal society is an eclectic one. Though mostly ignored and ignored even by the writer of these above-quoted lines, Pearl S. Buck poses a challenge to the reader who develop an affinity and aesthetic liking for her style. The challenge is well-taken by quite a number of writers as Peter Conn, Nora Sterling, Ann La Farge, Warren Sherk and Karen J. Leong to name a few.

Apart from *The Good Earth*, none of her novels has received much critical attention. Various studies have been carried out to read her fiction, but still much needs to be done to explore the various facets of her writings. To critique her

fiction and write a thesis on it definitely requires a good amount of confidence and conviction. There are many of her novels about which there is hardly any critical material available. Though Peter Conn talks about her writings also, nevertheless, his focus is her life and not her fictive oeuvre. Hence, working on her looks like a worthwhile attempt; an addition to the tradition of literary criticism.

I would like to state here that I have decided to call the novelist by her first name. Doing away with one of the traditions of patriarchy, I think some scope should be made to let her shed off a vestige of a painful marriage. She, with a missionary background must have received much criticism for divorcing her husband and coming back to America to stay with her publisher husband as much as she must have caused envy for entering a male domain of making and generating money and earning perhaps more than any other writer could do. She is an individual, a feminist once compared with Virginia Woolf (Woods 201), more famous than her male counterpart in marriage. So she should better be freed from the burden of vestigial surname and given a name that proclaims her individual identity. It may sound audacious, but, at the same time, more just. I definitely got encouraged when I discovered that Peter Conn also did so.

Pearl came from an ancestry that had some women of very bold and independent spirit. In her life, apart from the direct influence of her mother, she also inherited her grandmother, Deborah's assertive and indomitable spirit. Deborah turned a Methodist at the age of 60 and remained so throughout her life despite her husband and sons' opposition and disapproval. In a family of seven



sons among which all but one were Presbyterians, and a big domineering patriarch for a husband, she firmly stood her ground till the end of her life. With at least 22 neighbouring women she formed a kind of sisterhood who sat together, all unplanned on the porch or the sitting room, “gossiping, strengthening one another” so much so that, Pearl adds wittily: “If god was pre-eminent in that house, it was only by a narrow margin” (Buck, *The Fighting Angel* 11). With a rare and nonchalant humour, Pearl compares the parents of Andrew with God and Devil. This Manichean comparison is definitely full of sarcasm of the age old undisputed concept of God as “He” and the incriminated Eve as his opposite Devil. It is interesting to see how a woman who was till now busy taking care of the gastronomical needs of the entire family, turning out cheeses and pies and cakes and loaves of bread as a notable cook, turns into a woman of leisure and never makes her bed again in a house where it was often shouted that “the man was the head of the woman”(Buck, *The Fighting Angel* 12) and the two sisters were not married off easily and suitably for their father and brothers needed full-time well-subdued servants.

Pearl S. Buck’s college education at Randolph-Macon, Virginia which did not try to corrupt her “by home economics or dress making or cookery or any such soft substitute for hard thinking” (Buck, *My Several Worlds* 102) was approved by her mother, who had become “an ardent feminist” (Buck, *My Several Worlds* 101) as an outcome of her long stay with a Saint Paul-quoting patriarch for a husband. So, independence of thoughts and action was something Pearl S. Buck’s genetic inheritance.

With independence and strength in her heredity as well as education, Pearl also proved to be an iconoclast. She scandalised her people, her parents' evangelical friends and community by her speech as well as deeds. She felt so much concerned for the black people that she herself refused to enter a religious shrine that had no space for a coloured creature:

. . . I could not bear preaching from any white man, knowing what white men had done in Asia, even today in my own country I cannot go into a church and hear a white man preach when I know that were a black man to enter that church it is likely that no place could be found for him to sit and listen to the story of God's love for all mankind, and so there is no seat for me, either, in such churches. And this is because I grew up in China, in one world and not of it, and belonging to another world and yet not of it (Buck, *My Several Worlds* 55).

Pearl wrote for the black or other underprivileged people in her fiction and non-fiction writings. She closely observed the lives of the peasants in China and wrote about them in pre-Communist China when even Chinese writers did not talk about them. If she has to be placed in one of the major strains in American novel form, she carves a niche in Realism with some streaks of Naturalism especially in the character portrayal and the development of plot. Her simple form of writing accentuates and provides a contrast to, but in no way undermines the complexity of her subjects which is human nature and society.

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# *Gender*

*We allow our ignorance to prevail upon us and make us think we can survive alone, alone in patches, alone in groups, alone in races, even alone in genders.*

*(Maya Angelou)*

# Gender

Human species is not hermaphrodite. It is divided into the two parts; male and female, corresponding to masculine and feminine, both endowed with common humanity as well as something that the other lacks. This is indeed not an ideal situation; it is rather inconvenient and uncomfortable for both the sexes, evidenced by the fact that it results in an active engagement of a vast number of people in what is called, the battle of sexes. The battle of sexes is an eternal drama in human history, *herstory* or *theirstory* that catches the interest of all. Despite the interdependence and impracticality of isolation and unallied existence of either of the sexes, the see-saw of power politics and its concomitant dialectics in the sociological, theological, and historical discourses have always existed and interested and drawn the attention of social members or agents. The biological split into two ascertains the necessity of both the sexes in equal terms; nevertheless, the situation has always been a matter of contention and not a matter of power equilibrium. The judgement in this lawsuit though historically and sociologically has been mostly male-biased, should remain in abeyance for want of an impartial jury in human society. "Man is", Simone de Beauvoir maintains, "at once judge and party to the case; but so is woman" (Beauvoir "Introduction" 15-16).

In order to mark a difference between what is determined by nature and therefore is unalterable and what follows and develops resultantly in societies and hence is changeable in varying degrees in different societies, the anthropological studies discuss two kinds of notions: sex and gender. Sex is the

difference between man and woman, based on biology and procreative roles. Gender is dissemblance in the social assignment of roles, which is maintained and justified with the help of religious, theological, mythological, psychological and different other social discourses.

Margaret Mead in her study *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935) defines the notion of gender, based on sex roles. Sex roles, though varying in different cultures at different times, are explained, decided, maintained and reproduced in societies as extensions of the biological or anatomical reality of being male or female. She bases the assignment of roles on a differential psychology that analyses the masculine and feminine temperaments or talents. Christine Delphy, a materialist feminist, criticises Margaret Mead for taking sex-roles as arbitrary and not analysing them with scrutiny and reasoning. Christine Delphy finds problem with assertion on sexual difference especially in relation to women, so much so that the women seem “to have an existence that transcends social relations and historical contexts” (Alphonso 61). The assertion on women’s physical existence undermines their intellectual, social and human aspects and relegates them to the function of body only. Thinking in terms of temperaments, specific to women and men, psychologises the functions of body and leads to the rationalisation of roles. The assignment of roles based on the convenience of the society (read patriarchal set-up), culture and civilisation, is taken as something that naturally evolves from the fact that one is born with a particular set of genitalia. I would rather call it, utilitarian patriarchy. A later



development or extension from sex-related temperaments to sex-roles and social status, in a way, paved the way to denaturalisation of sex-roles.

Delphy traces the denaturalization process of sex-roles back to the time of 'latent' feminism of Mirra Komrovsky's "The Functional analysis of Sex Roles" (1950), Viola Klein and Alva Myrdal's *Women's Two Roles: Home and Work* (1956) and Andre Michel (1959, 1960) who relate role with status. Societies tend to dichotomise the human characteristics into two sets and attribute one set to woman and the other to man. Thus, came out the cultural character of the division of labour and hierarchy associated with it, in women and men. Talking in terms of essences, as a part of common sense, is now, problematised. If the roles and positions of men and women are socially and culturally fixed, they are changeable also. The theory of harmony between the sexes and containment of women within traditional roles, and the rationale used to explain that it is good not only for the society but also for women, came under scrutiny and attack, as feminist movement moved ahead and started talking in a bolder and more challenging voice. The theory of mutational change in the sexes based on the fact that men had better access to food in Palaeolithic age while women stayed back to look after the children challenges even the biological determinism of sex and natural distribution of physical power being biased in favour of men.

Ann Oakley's *Sex, Gender and Society* (1972) questioned the 'differential psychology' of men and women and talked about the distinction between what is latent and what is acquired. According to Oakley, there is no evidence to establish that the attitude, aptitude, talent and behaviour in a person are a result of

biological determinism; they are rather a result of social conditioning and acquisition. A very important point to observe is that the gender roles are determined and specified according to various cultures. Therefore, they have a tendency to vary. So defining gender-roles in absolute terms would be lopsided and unscientific. "The constancy of sex", Oakley says, "must be admitted, but so too must the variability of gender" (Oakley 16).

From sex to gender, and then back again, the human world divides into two separate but unequal spheres and domains. Sex assumes the magnitude that it has, because of gender. Other variables in traits, talents, accomplishments, intelligence and health come next. The hierarchy in gender hierarchises sex too. Therefore, sex becomes an after-effect of gender. The relative importance and valuation of male sex conditions the social agents, thus they internalise the notion of male superiority, generally, as unrelated with and unaffected by any other marks of superiority namely intelligence, accomplishments and other traits. The result is that "the most mediocre of males", as Beauvoir observes, "feels himself a demigod as compared with women". Alternatively, there arises a question whether he really does. She further adds in an incendiary tone: "Here is a miraculous balm for those affected with an inferiority complex, and indeed no one is more arrogant towards women, more aggressive or scornful, than the man who is anxious about his virility" (Beauvoir "Introduction" 15-16). Another reason why man does not want to accept women as equal and free on par with them is that it involves self-denial and relinquishing all the benefits that they have due to the women's current fancied and relegated position. Beauvoir and Pearl S. Buck

do not involve in illogical misoandry and male-bashing and pin their hope on the claims of democracy. Beauvoir acknowledges that the belief in the ideas of democracy can warrant a belief in the equality of all human beings (Beauvoir, "Introduction" 15-16).

Beauvoir maintains that what is denied to women socially is taken to be a part of their nature to refuse. She considers it to be a vicious circle that women and other marginalised groups like the black, who are kept in a situation of deprivation for a long time, are statically, considered to be inferior, which further ascertains their future deprivation. Attaching 'static value' with women's inferiority, which is dynamic as human nature is, in the Hegelian sense of "to have become", is in "bad faith" (Beauvoir "Introduction" 14-15). It is a mockery of human rationality that misogynists -including lovers, husbands, philanderers and even women who believe that the Sisyphean life of women is their suitable destiny- have been drawing upon not only religion, philosophy and theology but also upon science e.g. biology and experimental psychology. Beauvoir believes that the best egalitarian formula "equal but separate" for the North American Negroes has marginalised the Negroes even further and the same is true in case of caste, class or sex, as the method of rationalization remains more or less the same.

In the process of man making and woman making, not only girls but also boys need to undergo pain and suffering; while girl's freedom is curtailed, at the same time boy loses his right to cry and depend upon his mother and

demonstrate his feelings. For a boy it is easier, for he soon realises that his sacrifice will be well compensated with power, position and money.

Christine Delphy finds problem with the methodological and epistemological paradigms on which the discussions of sex and gender are based. Thinking of gender in terms of sex and presuming that the social gender dichotomy is based on natural sex dichotomy results in thinking of sex as a *container* in which the *content* of gender is put by society. The container, which takes precedence, is invariable while the content, which is seen to be a result of the former, is variable. Christine Delphy contends that gender should be recognized as independent of sex. The question asked as what kind of classification does sex lead to, should be modified as “why sex should give rise to any social classification” (Delphy 67).

Working further with the container and content rubric, the problems multiply. First, as it is obvious that content takes shape of the container, or if it does not, we try to adjust both of them suitably fit for each other. Hence, the argument that ‘gender’, the content should be thought of, as free from ‘sex’, the container. This is what is desired by Christine Delphy. If we follow this contention, there arises a big problem from the very word ‘gender’ and its etymological meaning.

The word ‘gender’ derives from Latin ‘*gener-*’ or ‘*genus*’, which means, “birth, race, kind, gender”. From the Anglo-French ‘*genre, gendre*’, Middle English *gendre* is derived, dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary) According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2009, ‘gender’, in

Grammar, is a phenomenon in which the words of certain parts of speech, usually noun and its classes, pronoun, adjective and sometimes verb, through inflection or grammatical markings show concord with other parts of speech. Usually, among modern Indo-European languages, such as French, Spanish and Italian, gender is divided into two: masculine and feminine, while in Russian and German, it is divided into three: masculine, feminine and neuter. Nouns referring to masculine or feminine are usually logical, while other nouns are masculine or feminine arbitrarily. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*) From the etymological meaning, the implications that come out are that 'gender' derives from a root word Latin '*gener-*' or '*genus*', which is determined at the time of birth, meaning class and rank. As a grammatical phenomenon, gender inheres in every discourse that is embodied in language. Thus, like 'sex' the word 'gender' itself is problematised. Either, there should be some new coinage or 'gender' should be declared to have nothing to do with its word of origin.

On 'naturalist premises' the division of labour is anthropologically explained to be a result of the different functions of male and female in procreation. Sex is taken as a receptacle for classifications in psycho-cognitive terms. Sex is intrinsically salient. Moreover, it is argued that human mind universally bases knowledge on classifications. For Delphy, the most important question that needs to be asked is why other equally distinguishable physical traits do not lead to classifications, which are dichotomous and result in not only distinct but also hierarchical social roles (Delphy 67). For example, at the arrival of a new baby, the first question most likely to be asked is whether the baby is a girl

or a boy rather than how the health or weight of the baby is, which are undeniably more important questions especially about any living organism. The Manichean perception of looking at things in binary oppositions always does not hold validity as Delphy contends. Despite the fact that distinction or difference gives meanings to things but the differentiations are often multiple and not always hierarchical. She illustrates her ideas with the examples of vegetables, which are commensurable with each other and defy any attempt of hierarchisation. She goes on to say that even because of the way we think about sex which is not wholly dependent on the difference in the functions of procreation—who can deliver babies and who possesses penis and “the way a given society represents ‘biology’ to itself”—it is also a social construct as gender is (Delphy 67). Finally yet importantly, she questions whether division would always presume hierarchy and if it is so, in a feminists’ utopia, would women usurp men’s place and again set up another hierarchy or is it not possible to banish hierarchy and suspend our judgement and then imagine and think of women men and human society? If the social members are so sex-obsessed, that enquiry about a newly born baby’s sex takes precedence over concern for its health and weight, and the colours, pink or blue are not a matter of choice but of sex distinction; then, feminist utopia turns out to be just the mirror image of the present world, which, in all practical sense, means another dichotomised and hierarchised polar world, based on a philosophy of vendetta.

Thinking about division and hierarchy leads to Marxist analysis of society. To Marx, all societies have been classed societies (*Manifesto*). Despite this, Marx

and Marxists postulate and envision a classless society. The 1970s Women's Liberation Movement inspired Marxist feminists in Britain to analyse and critique Marx's neglect of domestic labour in his analysis of capitalism. However, Marxist theory provided them with the broad framework to work with (Gardiner). The constructionist-feminists with a materialist base try to challenge the patriarchal distribution of wealth and unequal division of labour. It would be too simplistic to imagine that with the collapse of capitalist system, patriarchy will cease to exist and emancipation of women will come about automatically. The reason is that, Capitalism inherited a social system, with "a historical and moral element" (Marx *Capital*), that decided roles based on sex.

It is precisely this "historical and moral element" which determines that a "wife" [woman] is among the necessities of a worker, that women rather than men do housework, and that Capitalism is heir to a long tradition in which women do not talk to god. In this "historical and moral element" which presented Capitalism with a cultural heritage of forms of masculinity and femininity. It is within this "historical and moral element" that the entire domain of sex, sexuality and sex oppression is subsumed. (Rubin 537)

To Hartmann, Patriarchy and Capitalism are "two separate but interlocking sets of social relations, each with a material base, each with its own dynamic" (qtd. in Ruthven 28) that oppress the proletariat and the female proletariat even doubly. In the bourgeoisie, women may be the beneficiary of the capitalist system and may work as a tool for the promotion and development of

the capitalist system, and yet be given an insignificant position of a pure consumer or a repository of symbolic capital, to serve the ornamental function for the bourgeois society. A key concept that needs to be discussed in this study is the concept of 'labour' especially women's labour, to understand Pearl's novel *The Good Earth* which catapulted her into international fame. This discussion will come with the reading of the novel.

The class in relation to gender is to be used as a trope to understand the power relation between the sexes. Working in the trope of class or race while talking about gender question, does not mean drawing a strict analogy and dragging it up to the magnitude of epic simile. The tenor remains more important than the vehicle. At the same time the complexity of the case, in case of double or triple jeopardy e.g. as being lower class woman or brown or black working class woman, is to be taken into account, with a more comprehensive epistemological and methodological frame work. While studying Pearl's fiction, it is necessary to complexify the methodological base, as she talks about not only white women but also of black or Asian women, not only the feudal families and their women but also the poor labourers, farmers and the upward moving labour class and women. Her range contains diachronic and synchronic width and latitude and a proper study of her works involves willingness and swiftness in changing the lenses through which to see and to understand and analyse her work better.

From sex to gender, from division to hierarchy, and from reductionism or simplification to complexity brings the discussion from Marx to Bordieau. Bordieau perceives human society as fields of power and instead of just one form



of economic capital defined in material terms, he identifies various forms of capital in society that can convert into symbolic capital, determining the power of the social members. Bordieu defines symbolic capital as “the acquisition of an image or reputation for competence, respectability and honourability that are easily converted into political positions as a local or national notable” (*Forms of Capital*).

The first form of capital is simply the Economic capital that includes wealth, income, property and inheritances. The Social capital is dependent on the social contacts and networking of social and personal relationships. The Cultural capital, which includes education, knowledge and taste, has three forms of manifestations: the embodied means the long-lasting, mental, psychological and physiological dispositions; the objectified means goods and commodities; and the institutionalised means mainly the educational credentials that ratify or endorse the cultural capital. Any form of capital turns into symbolic capital when it starts ensuring power and respect. The value of the different forms of capital is measured in terms of their convertibility into symbolic capital in the social field. The question whether the subjects in the Bordieu’s social fields are only men who own, inherit, acquire, collect and accumulate various forms of capital resulting in symbolic capital that are power and respect is to be probed in context of the novels read. Women may be acknowledged as potential subjects in the struggle for the acquisition of the symbolic capital. They are trafficked as objects in the market more than men slaves are. It is exemplified and manifested especially in marriages, wherein they are exchanged, transacted and valued as repositories of

family capital. They are valued as economic capital as they may bring dowry in many cultures, as social capital because they establish contacts and social relationships between families, clans, political groups and as cultural capital as objects of beauty or having some artistic talent or as custodians of morality and cultural and aesthetic refinement and taste. There has been a movement and shift in women's position; from being mere objects or commodities, transacted in the marriage market or being mere consumers, abetting capitalist patriarchy, to being subjects, with a direct involvement in the market as a labour force, whose labour coverts into symbolic capital, or direct or indirect investors or entrepreneurs. They occupy the position of the subject, struggling to acquire various forms of capital commanding respect, control and claiming leadership, distinction and power position in the social fields of power.

Pearl S. Buck's fiction offers diversity in female power-positions. There are those who are trafficked as slave or in the marriage-market; those who render labour as unpaid proletariat or labourers without any chance of its conversion into economic capital, which is the base form of all forms of capital; or those who are just embodiment of cultural capital with their beauty and refinement and moral uprightness. There are those who occupy in a way the subject position in the struggle for power for example women entrepreneurs, professionals or artisans asserting their individualities, or even such that covet the highest form of power and ascend the very throne. Pearl S. Buck's female characters, thus, include the meek and docile females, "the fertile organisms, like fowl with high egg-production" (Beauvoir "The Mother" 21), women from the poor Chinese

peasantry, the rising class, women who are commoditised, or who are valued as wage workers, to the women with a shifting position from the object to the subject, from a womb-centred existence to a more meaningful and power-wielding position occupying imperial throne.

Though Pearl S. Buck has voiced her basic concern for the women in her essays especially in *Of Men and Women*, a collection of essays she got published at the time of America's entry into world war II. To her the meaning of democracy was not fully realised until everyone, men as well as women have the same chance and the same freedom in their lives. Perhaps with a deliberate aim to sound incendiary, as one has to in order to shake the smugness of the society, she says:

If the white, Gentile, adult male believes that his nation is a democracy, let him remember there are others – and perhaps nearer to him than he knows or cares to believe – to whom he appears only as a dictator. (Buck *Men and Women* 118)

The writer is talking about a social problem that can be called patriarchal fascism. She does not believe in the sacrifice of women to leave the power-positions to men. As she is able to see the other side of the story in war-torn global situation, and felt the need for women to enter the world politics.

She is against women sitting back quietly and smugly, getting consolation from their so-called moral and spiritual superiority: "All that woman has gained from her endeavour to be man's moral teacher has been the lonely task of practicing what she preached" (Buck *Men and Women* 61).

Pearl S. Buck had herself felt such loneliness throughout her life after the failure of her first debacle on personal front. Though she attempted to break free from the social and cultural cage and proved to be very successful at that, however, she suffered from social marginalization, though not so apparent and perceptible, but, rather, of symbolic nature. Pearl, in her childhood, saw a missionary couple as her parents. Her first observation of man-woman relationship was based on an inequity that made the woman suffer more, to the extent that her spirit started regretting her sacrifices and rebels against the oppression of an unsympathetic religious zealot and constant denial of God who refused to show any sign until the end of her life. In *Exile*, which is a biographical novel based on her mother's life, Pearl S. Buck tries to question the ethics of women's morality, subjugation based on religion and lack of satisfaction and fulfilment at emotional, material and spiritual front. Religious patriarchy relegates women into a corner and denies them spiritual solace, the 'divine sign' that would give women the same return and consolation that men find. With the loss of a number of children to various tropical diseases in the hot climate of China and due to lack of proper medical care, Caroline Stulting undergoes a process of disillusionment about the sacrifices she made by denying her worldly desires. Her very marriage was based on her denial of her attraction to a better looking and earthly man. Her decision to marry an impractical, remote, dry, and full of snobbery -that a patriarchal interpretation of religion gives him- man founds a marriage that is weak at foundation. The relationship lacks in mutual sympathy and understanding of each other's needs, since both of them belong to two

different worlds. Caroline learns the futility of all her sacrifices when it is too late for her to undo her decisions. The lack of sympathy between the spouses is compensated to an extent, by the daughter's unusual sensitivity towards her mother's plight. The Freudian assertion on Electra is not to be evidenced much, beyond a little affection and attachment of consanguinity between daughter and father in Pearl S. Buck's fictive world.

The husband in *The Time is Noon* is also an ecclesiastical figure. He is sensitive towards the black people and feels urgency to expand his missionary work and extend material and spiritual help to them. He is all the time thinking of the ways to generate funds for them. He can feel and hear the cry of the souls still unblessed. Nevertheless, his sympathy does not expand beyond his Evangelism. He is not as sympathetic towards his wife who uses the discarded shoes of her daughter to make both ends meet and save a little for their children. In all the efforts, the wife becomes the sacrificial lamb receiving reward neither from god nor from the husband. She hates him for subjecting her to a life of slavery, slavery for the man and the church.

Pearl S. Buck thinks that women are confined to what she called "engine rooms" to take care of the jobs that earn no accolades and lead women to "devastating loneliness". This internal colonization is to Buck symptomatic of fascism and in "Women a minority group" *Opportunity*, July 1940, Pearl adumbrates Ti-Grace Atkinson's assertion in *Amazon Odyssey* that women should form a "sex class" (qtd. in Chancer 36) so that their cause is not diluted by sexual and emotional intimacy with their oppressors. Pearl S. Buck hailed from a family

that was in China to carry out a divine command and was on a mission of “Manifest Destiny” which translated for the women as “Manifest Domesticity” (Leong 8-9) and she, as a sensitive individual, developed resentment against such limitation based on patriarchal fascism.

Pearl S. Buck could sense fascist symptoms in the war period in America, and was apprehensive that in America also women might be relegated to the same fate as they were in the fascist countries. In response to Alma Lutz’s invitation to join her in support of Equal Rights Amendment, she says:

. . . someday men are going to find that it is cheaper to keep women in cells and cages or barracks or harems whence they can be summoned when service is wanted or the state needs new recruits. Women have always been relegated whenever men have relapsed into thinking that the sole important functions of women are to service men and to breed children. (Buck, *Men and Women* 61)

Pearl S. Buck shows affinity with the radical feminists’ idea of “the personal is political” (Millet 1970) and believes that a person who is well behaved in the outside world, but turns into a callous or cruel person at home with his woman is basically evil and such a person should be exposed. As Sarah Evans exposed the hypocrisy of the left leaders who on one hand talked of racial and class equality, were on the other, known for their offensively sexist behaviour towards women (Chancer and Watkins 35). Hana, in Pearl S. Buck’s short story “The Enemy” (*Hearts Come Home and Other Stories*) by looking at a wounded

American soldier, thinks of the rumours of the tortures meted out to the prisoners of war. She applies the simple reasoning of overall behavioural assessment demanded by the radical feminism and does not rule out the possibility of their truth:

. . . sometimes she remembered such men as General Takima, who beat his wife cruelly at home, though no one mentioned it now that he had fought so victorious a battle in Manchuria. If a man like that could be so cruel to a woman in his power, would he not be cruel to one like this, for instance? ("The Enemy" 12)

According to Pearl S. Buck, men as well as women are responsible in maintaining this oppressive fascist patriarchy, especially the middle class women who were not ready and far sighted enough to sacrifice and unsettle their current security and comfort for the sake of future social progress. She criticises the complacency and lackadaisical attitude of women with much contempt and repugnance:

Content with their so-called spiritual security, women have let their souls rot into pettiness and idleness and vacuity and general indifference in world crying and dying and for want of real superiority of spirit and moral worth . . . If women are really superior to men, could they sit blind and deaf and dumb, knitting their interminable knitting, crocheting and talking and going to teas and bridge parties and knitting again, and exchanging recipes and knitting and knitting, and re-arranging

their furniture and curling their hair and painting their nails and going to style shows and knitting, knitting, knitting while the world goes down to darkness . . . (qtd. In Conn 247-8)

Catherine Woods found a kinship between Pearl S. Buck and Virginia Woolf in their gender analyses in her review of the essay, *Of Men and Women*. Conn confidently declares that Pearl S. Buck and psychologist, Olga Knopf “coupled gender and race in [their] egalitarian vision” (Conn 248). On one hand, it is easy to find such statements By Pearl S. Buck that exemplify her assertion on women and men being simply human psychologically. She says that women should be persons and humans and not angels. Like Margret Fuller, she advocates women’s participation in all occupations she would like to get into. On the other, she in her fictive world, we witness that women mostly try to teach men lesson of democracy and equality. Of course, they are not weak and lifeless angels here, but rather professional with awesome knowledge and expertise (Conn 247).

*The New Year* is an exploration of the nuances of man-woman relationship and the supposed basic difference in their respective natures. Nevertheless, women mostly have a set of dispositions labelled as feminine by internalizing what is *objective* or external in the society. Therefore, the female protagonist of *The New Year* becomes the complementary conscience of her male counterpart that he seems to have lost in the atmosphere of insensitivity of the war years. *The New Year* opens at a point of crisis in the lives of the main characters. The husband, Christopher Winters, a promising politician receives a letter from his son by a Korean girl jettisoned and forgotten long ago in Korea. Surprisingly, the



revelation of this news results in an understated reaction from the wife. Christopher Winters explains his action by explaining it as a result of his loneliness in a strange land where he is sent during wartime. After the action of war is over, a sense of ennui leads him to find recreation in dancing Korean girls. This temporary liaison brings forth a son that he leaves behind as he receives the order to go back to his country. Soonya, typically like a simple marriage-oriented woman pins her hope to the security of marriage that Chris never intends to give her. He knows that it is practically not feasible and involves too undesirable sacrifices. Ironically, he gets involved in this casual relationship when he is already married. He is commissioned to leave for Korea just after three days of his marriage to Laura whom he himself proposes to. Surprisingly the novel does not mention that he ever pines for Laura and his marriage does not prevent him from taking another woman. The polygamous tendency in men is perhaps due to an absence of a threat that can be called symbolic violence or in other words social unacceptability.

Woman can achieve transcendence by loving a man not in her weakness but in her strength (Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* 679). Laura seems to be quite calm and composed at the revelation of her husband's fathering a child with a foreign woman on a foreign land. In characteristic sisterhood sympathy, she does not blame the woman and is convivial to her more than she is towards her husband. The meaning in her life is not entirely dependent on what she is in relation to her husband. Her identity is that of an oceanographer working on medicinal properties of ocean plants and animals and authoring a book based on her

discoveries. Before her marriage, she was scuba diving in search for planktons. She knows that it is easier for her to cope with the situation as she can lose herself in her work that absorbs her mentally and keeps her emotionally balanced: "That was the way men escaped, too, into work. It was amazing how much suffering one could tolerate if there was work to do" (Buck, *The New Year* 62). Laura is delineated as a modern American woman who feels that her humanity is often forgotten. She is endowed with a good brain. She often feels that the society often ignores her as a person. She senses that it is a kind of penalty for being so much unlike a woman desired by a patriarchal society:

That was the penalty that a woman paid for having what men called "a man's brain," although nothing infuriated her more than the idea that brains belonged only to men, as though nature bestowed brains by sex instead of by chance and design of genes. Was it her fault that she, the girl, was the brilliant one in her family? (Buck, *The New Year* 102)

Not every man or member of her society finds any mismatch between her and her brain. Her colleague, Dr. Wilton trusts her scientific acumen more than he does his own and gets discoveries validated and verified by her. Only once in the entire novel, Laura is shown to be doing what Pearl detests as an activity consuming most of women's time, e.g. knitting and needle work with a purpose to engage her hands, when her mind is troubled and could not be engaged:

When he did not answer she went on with her needlepoint, an ancient work which she had begun years before and now picked up

of an evening without intent or much hope of ever finishing, but it gave her hands something to do when she could not read, if she were alone with Chris. (Buck, *The New Year* 246)

Nevertheless, the stereotype of knitting, sewing and cooking woman is to be found in Kim Christopher's carved puppet family in which the man is reading a book and the woman is sewing.

Soonya and Laura are in mutual sisterhood sympathy for each other and the usual alleged jealousy between women is not found between them. "She has no illusions about men, says Mr. Choe, "You should hear her give a lecture to her girls" (Buck, *The New Year* 88). She hates men and feels power in shutting American men out of the best and most famous *House of Flowers* (a euphemism for brothel). She is a vindictive woman and offers her talents at a high price now. Being alone and a single parent, she values money. Once she gave her heart and body to a man, as a sentimental fool of a woman does. An experienced and embittered Soonya offers her services at a high price. She carries well the responsibility of a child by an American father who abandons her with a month old child. After losing her capacity to love anyone else she tries to find strength in loathing men and especially the American soldiers who are just intent on fulfilment of their biological needs. At the commoditisation of Soonya and her girls, Mr. Choe an upper class customer, instead of acknowledging their financial constraints and obligations, tries to give a simplistic explanation, which differentiates men and women in essentialist terms:

. . . we know that men need women as women do not need men. Men are quite simple, in fact. We need women as our wives and the mothers of our children. We also need women as sexual instruments. It is seldom that these two functions can be fulfilled by the same women. We accept this and we allow women to divide themselves. Those who wish to have the stable lives of wife and mother give themselves only in marriage. Those who for various reasons in accordance with their own natures do not need this stability move easily into prostitution. (Buck, *The New Year* 119)

It is totally a lopsided perspective through which woman's nature is analysed and the issue of material return for her labour is not considered, which is one of the main reasons behind women turning into prostitutes.

Prostitutes are objects for entertainment and recreation and their human persons and needs behind their bodies are obliterated. In *Other Gods*, a simple farm boy like Bert Holm finds objects in women's bodies. He enjoys watching topless women in "Folies Bergere" in Paris but feels uncomfortable watching men performing make-believe lovemaking. To him, such objectification suits female body but not male bodies. Kit's sensitive eyes find the real individual women with families behind the topless dancers, tired of a sick job and eager to get back home. She is instrumental in sensitising her unimaginative husband towards the plight of the half-naked girls. At her behest, he looks at them and finds them to be not mere toy-girls, but responsible women trying to earn their livelihood.

Pearl does not entirely incriminate men. They are given a sympathetic treatment at the hands of their female counterparts, which, can be read as an attempt to establish moral superiority of women. For her belief was in being a human first and then a sexed creature. However, she never propagates that woman is supposed to be moral custodian of her society as it makes her a lonely practitioner in what she preaches. Despite this assertion on women's humanity, Laura who has little relation with Kim Christopher, has been shown to be thinking of him all the time which gradually makes Christopher Winters live up to his image of a responsible and courageous man and declare his paternity of his son to the world. Pearl may have created Laura on her own image. Laura cannot have a biological child, though she has strong maternal instinct.

Among Pearl's women of power that people her fiction, Tzu Hsi is perhaps most important. She is a woman of fierce and immense energy who ruled China directly or as Regent, from 1861 to 1908. Pearl was much fascinated by her enigmatic character who took power in her hand in a feudal, patriarchal society, which did not sanction woman's rule. The novel recounts almost the entire life span of the Empress Dowager from the time when she is still among the commoners in love with one of her kinsmen like an ordinary girl. She is a Manchu girl who journeys from being a common orphaned girl called Orchid to the most revered and deified position of the Old Buddha. She is very ambitious despite her womanhood and knows that she has only one way to enter the palace, which is by strangulating and sacrificing her love for her childhood betrothed, at the altar of her ambition, by becoming one among innumerable number of concubines for

the Prince. She is a beauty with a brain, an admirable combination that is described in appreciatory words by the writer:

She was a handsome girl, this Orchid, seeming taller than she was because she was slender and held herself erect. Her features were strong but not coarse, her nose straight, her eyebrows clear, her mouth well shaped and not too small. Her great beauty lay in her eyes. They were long and large and exceedingly clear, the black and the white pure and separate. Yet such beauty would have been meaningless except for the natural spirit and intelligence that informed her entire being, although she was still very young. She was self- controlled, her strength apparent in the smoothness of her movements and the calm of her manner. (Buck *Imperial Woman* 1-2)

Pearl creates two polarised female characters in *Imperial Woman*: Sakota who is an embodiment of all womanly traits, meek and docile; and Yehonala, an intelligent, robust, ambitious and strong-willed woman who would settle for nothing less than the throne itself. She is a contending subject with an ambition to collect as much symbolic capital as possible. Surprisingly, her lover and fiancé kinsman's instruction to this "tiger heart" (Buck, *Imperial Woman* 9) is:

The higher you rise, the greater will your freedom be. Rise high, my love—the power is yours. Only and Empress can command.  
(54)

Jung Lu is one of the strong and progressive men who are a number of steps ahead of his time. In his eyes, a woman of power is admirable and loveable. However, in his time and ethos, his union with a woman who has once been in the chamber of the King is impossible. Still, he chooses to promote the woman he loves in her path of ambition.

Yehonala, who grows up in feudal patriarchy, imbibing, since her childhood, the notions of women's moral, intellectual and physical inferiority, finds her intelligence and astuteness as misfit in her woman's body. She is very often shown to be sulking at her biological destiny. She knows her womanhood is a curse and big impediment on her path to glory and believes that her sins in her former life must be responsible for her being born as a woman in her present life. In many situations, she needs to remain quiet, despite her belief that she is more intelligent than the men in power are. However, it is obvious that her ascent to power is possible only through a meandering and labyrinthine way as a woman. For this, she has to work hard, double the amount that a man has to, in her situation. She is clever enough to change her weakness into strength. What would have been impossible for a man to achieve without being born an heir becomes possible for her because of her womanhood. Since the very first day in the palace, she tries to stand out of the crowd of concubines by being disobedient and throwing tantrums in front of those who do not matter much. This is the way she establishes her authority and right to rule; rule by fear. She tries to attract attention of the Dowager Mother by taking care of her in a number of ways. She is a human being born with twin strengths: womb that enables her to perform the

act of creation and an intellect that surpasses her contemporary men in its power, calibre and political acumen. She, an incarnation of mother right (Engels), takes pride in performing the act of creation that is her biological destiny. In pregnancy, she feels proud and triumphant to achieve what is impossible for a man.

Yehonala is an androgynous personality whose strength lies in a combination of the best of *masculine* and *feminine* traits. The writer debunks the constructed compartmentalisation of masculine and feminine traits and their sex-specificity by creating such characters. The creative function which proclaims the value and worth of the female sex is upheld in the novel as a matter of feminine pride. Moreover, the patriarchal usurping of the right of matrilineality is ridiculed by a suggestion in the novel that Yehonala perhaps carries the seed of her own choice in her womb which would have the patronymic of the so called the Son of the Heaven. This wilful woman is not ready to nurture the seed of a weak man in her womb that she discovers the Son of the Heaven is:

She knew now what this man was, a weak and fitful being, possessed by a passion he could not satisfy, a lust of the mind more frightful than the lust of the flesh. When he was defeated he wept upon her breast. This, this was the Son of Heaven! (Buck, *Imperial Woman* 41)

Yehonala can see through the myth of the Son of Heaven. She is a woman of sharp intellect and can see what others do not, or are too afraid to acknowledge. For Sakota, the Son of Heaven is fixed in his place as a haloed being. It is observed that Sakota is never hungry while Yehonala has a robust health and a good

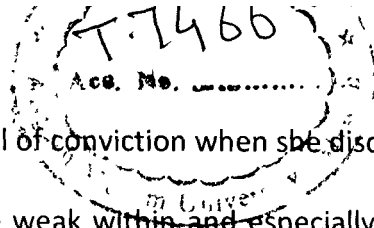


appetite. Yehonal has a great appetite and libido, which she channelises into the pursuit of power. She does not hesitate to assert her sexuality in presence of Sakota and her relative Jung Lu. She manages to meet Jung Lu within the four walls of the palace and the baby she carries is suggested to be the result of their union. Yet she strangulates her love and desire for the man. She knows that she is well compensated by her ascent to the very throne, the highest pedestal that a man or a woman can ever reach in terms of power. She is delineated as a woman of fierce energy having a “tiger heart” (*Imperial Woman* 9) as declared by one of the tiring women. She manages to meet her lover kinsman Jung Lu after spending time with the King who disgusts her. Her love is not self-annihilatory as it is mostly in women. She loves in her strength and not in her weakness. (Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* 679), with her mind fixed on her ultimate goal:

Place and power, the pride of being above all – these  
too were her necessity . . .

. . . I cannot love, she thought. I cannot love enough to  
make me willing to yield myself to love. And why? Because I  
know myself too well. Were I to cramp myself into my love, my  
heart would die, and having nothing left but hatred for him.  
And yet I love him! (Buck, *Imperial Woman* 218)

The love and passion she feels for Jung Lu does not impede her way to her ultimate goal. She foresees the outcome of sacrificing too much for a man, which Carie and Marry cannot see before it is too late. Thus, they undergo process of painful disillusionment and are finally left with disgust and hatred for their



husbands. Yehonala's ambition reaches the level of conviction when she discovers that the men holding the reign of the land are weak within and especially so in comparison to her. She believes, in terms of essences, that she is a man imprisoned in a woman's body. The function of patriarchy is to tranquillise woman's brain and deem it redundant. Tzu Hsi actively thinks about the political situation in her country, and wants to take control the situation herself.

Ah, that she had been born a man! She would herself have led the Imperial armies against the invaders. What sins had she committed in some former life that she was born a female in these times when strong men were wanted? She brooded upon the eternal question, sending mind and memory far back into her deepest being. She could not pierce memory beyond the womb. She was what she was born and she must do with what she had, a man's mind in a woman's body. Man's mind and woman's body she would combine to do what must be done. (Buck, *Imperial Woman* 99)

In essentialist terms, woman is more about a womb, body, nature and animal realm rather than mind, intellect, culture and civilization. If a woman were intelligent, it would supposed to be some kind of anomaly. A woman has no right to be ambitious and intelligent and if she is as in case of Tzu Hsi. She mostly feels some degree of shame and culpability in a patriarchal society.

The novel also discusses the exploitation of the concubines in the palace. They are provided with all kinds of luxuries but theirs is a realm of repressed

female libido. They are so many that the King could not possibly have needed them all. Therefore, they are supposed to be languishing in the palace for the whole life as virgins, even if they are never summoned. The way to escape is forever closed for the occupants of the *harem* called the Forbidden City:

If a concubine escaped there was no place for her in the known world. If Yehonala returned to her uncle's house, who was Sakota's father, then the whole family might be killed for her sin. (Buck, *Imperial Woman* 51)

Feudal patriarchy is most repressive towards women. A woman may be provided with all the material comforts and luxuries, but her human sexuality remains totally ignored. The palace symbolises repression and asphyxiation of the female primal instinct and sublimation of androcracy to the level of divinity. The court's custom of keeping women hidden was emulated in urban society in China, setting standards of behaviour that reduced women to a state of near-total domestic seclusion or domestic colonisation (Davin 28).

The novel dramatizes Yehonala's inner dilemma and an inner tug-of-war between her strong desire to have the man she loves and her ambition to climb up the ladder of power in the palace. Ironically, the King despite being a weakling can have more women than he can possibly remember, while, Yehonala, despite her power, is not able to raise and marry the man she loves.

Empress Dowager (Yehonala) is totally against foreigners' encroachment and claiming extraterritoriality. Her unbending and non-compromising attitude even after the two opium wars surprises Prince Kung. What would have been a

strong will to power in man is read as her inability to compartmentalise the workings of mind, body and heart:

He knew that woman's mind is not an instrument apart from her own being. She does not separate herself as man does, now flesh, now mind, now heart. She is three in one, a unity complete and unified. (*Imperial Woman* 132)

Merely either an object of desire or an instrument of reproduction, obsession with female body is a focal point of discussion in essentialist discourses. A female person is prominent more as sexual beings and not as social beings. The category of sex tightly holds woman (Wittig 127). It may be an anxiety coupled with awe for the female body that evolved into relegating woman just to function of the body. The opportunity of self-transcendence that every human being tries for, out of the limits and claustrophobia of the corporeal form is denied to her. She refuses what is denied. Hence, she is declared immanent; while man is supposed to be transcendental.

Empress Dowager, contrary to the assessment in the above-quoted lines by Prince Kung, has well compartmentalised existence of both her physical and mental functions. Yehonala or Tzu Hsi's character produces a proof of materialist-feminists' claim that a woman is not born, but is rather constructed by the society (Wittig 128-9).

Tzu Hsi who cannot help but grab power as and when the opportunity comes her way, still believes that a woman is inherently evil. This is a notion, upheld by many religious scriptures and mythologies. Eve is evil. She is the one

who is responsible for the Fall of Adam. Especially, an ambitious woman who cannot tone herself down to the level of 'womanhood' defined by her people is blameworthy in her own opinion. In *Mandala*, Father Francis Paul ponders over the fate of Raziya, Sultan Iltamish's daughter. Her father appointed her, amongst her brothers, to rule.

She was a great sovereign, and sagacious, just, beneficent and learned, a dispenser of justice, the cherisher of her subjects, a woman of manlike talent, one who was endowed with all the admirable attributes and qualifications necessary for kings. But she did not attain the destiny in her creation of being computed among men, of what advantages were all these excellent qualifications unto her? Alas, she ruled only three years and was killed. (Buck, *Mandala* 357)

All the leadership and administrative qualities in Razia are taken as masculine and so as misplaced attributes in her. Her sex is taken as her disadvantage. Her murder is due to a double jealousy of male siblings towards their female sibling whose triumph, to them, is a grave matter of shame.

Tzu Hsi's task seems to be a kind of hurdle-race and the hurdles are within her as well as without, since she realizes the magnitude of the social obstacles and a sense of guilt that she suffers from:

She was woman. The Chinese did not trust a woman for their ruler. Women they said were evil rulers. The Empress Mother acknowledged some truth here. She had read history well in long

lonely hours and she knew that in the eighth century, in the dynasty of T'ang, the Empress Wu, wife of the great Emperor Kao Tsung, had seized the throne for herself against her own son, and wickedness had sullied the name of all women. Men rose against her, and freed the young Emperor from the jail in which his own mother had cast him. Yet he was still not safe, for then his wife, the Empress Wei, in her turn coveted the Throne, and she hid behind curtains and listened to gossip and stirred up such mischief that death alone could quiet her. No sooner was she in her grave, a heavy stone upon it to hold her down, than the Princess T'ai-ping, her enemy, plotted to poison the Emperor's son, the Emperor's son, the Heir, and she, too, must be killed. But this same Heir, when he was the Emperor Hsun Tsang, fell under the power of his beautiful concubine, Kwei-fei, who did so bewitch the Emperor by her beauty and the brilliance of her, and did so ruin him by her love of gems and silk and perfumes, that the people again rebelled, and their leader forced Kwei-fei to hang herself before her royal lover's eyes. Yet the glory of T'ang died with her, for the Emperor would not rule again but hid himself in perpetual mourning. The history of these women was evil and they were still her enemies, though long dead. Would the people believe that a woman could rule justly and well? (Buck, *Imperial Woman* 199)

Chinese history as recounted here is full of examples of strong, intelligent and ambitious women whose eyes were on the throne. The fact that they are not legitimate successors because of their sex for the throne cannot stop them from dreaming of what they coveted most, the very throne. They have to be subdued and well penalised so that they can teach other women the lesson that glory is not meant for them. The only way to feel the power is an indirect or vicarious way to realize their dreams by proxy, by producing male children who can ascend the throne. Only a son can justify their existence, which is supposed to be an equivalent to *Phallus*, the symbol of power. *Penis envy* (Wagner) exist in women and perhaps better be explained as a natural feeling resulting from the knowledge that being born with male genitals results in certain privileges.

For Tzu Hsi, being a man is more desirable in order to be able to realize her dreams sooner. Ambition in woman is seen as a source of evil. Woman as a ruler is considered evil for woman is only to procreate and produce rulers who may become but not to be ruler herself. This single identity or role is enough and supposed to be the *raison d'être* for woman justifying her entire existence. The time remaining after gestation weaning and rearing of child, and the mental energy, which is hardly satisfied in gestation, are comfortably taken to be non-existent. A woman who wants self-transcendence and fulfilment would suffocate, fret and may get involved in intrigues and petty politics. For the suppressed always have subversive, seismic workings hidden inside and stays as a threat to the status quo. It is present in varying degrees in individual cases. Where it is stronger, it finds its way out. The power of patriarchy takes recourse to any

means in order to contain it. In cases of the Chinese women who pose as threats to patriarchal dynastic rule, capital punishment is granted as a moral lesson not only for women but also for men in close association or collusion with the mutinous females.

The validity of the sex-class argument is established by the fact that the ordinary folks are shown to have come together in order to put down a woman in case of the concubine Kwei-fei. This case of dissent leading to corrective steps taken by the common people who deem it to be their right to correct the royal family if it goes off the patriarchal norm involves the class matter also. It is also about lower class resentment against misappropriation of exchequer that is not supposed to be spent by the Emperor for a cocubine. It is perceived as a gross misappropriation by the concubine's fixation with jewellery. Other women e.g. the Empress Wu, wife of the great Emperor, the Empress Wei, and the Princess T'ai-ping all are given death penalty for they can set a wrong example. Hence, their pre-emptive example are set. Ironically, the inner workings of the mind of Tzu Hsi reveal that despite condemning all other women who step out of the female sphere and try to encroach into what is supposed to be the male domain, she is herself heading in the same direction. *Her lack of sympathy for the women* quietened in the most brutal manner is the failure of her sex-class (Chancer 36). This is how one example of a woman scaling a great height does not automatically lead to the uplift of the entire lot. Statistics matter. She may rather collude with and speak like the other sex in order to be accepted in a male-dominated society.



According to the Muted Theory, “women must convert their unique ideas, experiences, and meanings into male language in order to be heard” (Baer) and “women must translate their meanings, their thoughts, and their feelings into man’s terms in order to communicate” (Haines). Women’s different set of experiences sets women’s language different from men (Baer). Their talk is supposed to be more emotional and likely to be taken non-seriously. Men find it more difficult to understand women talk than women do to understand men talk. There are a number of pejoratives to describe women talk. They are reputed to have a sharp and nagging tongue in case they voice their demands. In *The Promise*, the scholar’s wife shows a mixed kind of reaction at her husband’s death who in his life did not take care of her. She is happy sometimes that her ‘good-for-nothing’ husband is dead and then feels much aggrieved at the thought that she is a widow, a state that is stigmatised for a woman. His cousin Lin Tan feels sympathetic for the dead opium-addicted old scholar and whispers into his wife’s ears: “I swear I believe that the old rascal knows that he has the best of it because she cannot make him hear anymore” (Buck, *The Promise* 7).

Tzu Hsi should be taken as an individual-case. Women can betray the case of their sex-class as she speaks man’s language and hence, colludes with the oppressors of women. This split in personality results in the defeat of women’s cause. She does not start working for the cause of women as a black or a union leader would likely to do in case he is in a power-position.

Tzu Hsi is shown to have committed the same ‘sins’ that she herself condemns. She adopts various means to be noticed by the Mother Dowager and

the Emperor and succeeds in displacing the Consort, Sakota. She acquires immense power by using her beauty and brilliance of mind on the Emperor, until he starts speaking her language. Adding to the Muted theory's assertion on women's peculiar way of speaking, it can be said that the same language converts to the language of power, depending whence it comes.

Yehonala (Tzu Hsi) not is interested in small-scale politics within the palace, but her interest lies in the fate of the nation. She tries to hear the discussion on the important matters of governance, knows how to influence the Emperor, and starts ruling the country first from behind the curtain before she can sit upon the throne. She removes all the impediments from her way and gets her son imprisoned when he refuses to obey her. As a ruler, she is as good and kind or bad and ruthless as a man can be. She promotes the Boxer revolution to crush the foreigners.

Pearl's treatment of woman characters is more extensive. She often talks about their emotional, material, physical needs with their intellectual aspiration. Nevertheless, her woman characters as mentioned in the context of Tzu Hsi, usually think about men and women in a dichotomised way. Madam Wu in *The Pavilion of Women* thinks in the most traditional way about the role of women and men. For her, procreation is the ultimate goal of humanity. Therefore, man must keep planting his seed to procreate in fertile soil, meaning young women. For Madam Wu, this rationale becomes an excuse to try to arrange for a concubine for her husband. It is rather an excuse for her to stay away from her husband and find self-transcendence by stopping to live as her husband's object

of desire. She thinks that the difference between man and woman is that woman knows that she is a tool in the endless creation of life while man ignores that he as well is. It is obvious that Madam Wu like many other Pearl's female characters tries to find a relationship, deeper than mere physical union. Her attraction to father André is due to her emotional and spiritual longings. The Maharani Moti like Madam Wu feels that she could love Father Francis Paul, had he not been a celibate. He is the only person who tries to understand the complex life in her palace as the wife of an Indian Raja. Pearl S. Buck's novel has woman characters who have 'sinful' thoughts about men other than their husbands. Kit Holm, Gail, Moti and Madam Wu all commit the same sin potentially. The fear of symbolic violence only contains them.

It is Madame Wu among Pearl S. Buck's other characters, who tries to see man-woman relationship closely and reaches an analysis, much akin to Shavian idea of Life Force. The vitalistic trend is missing here, but nature/life force's employment of woman who, in turn, employs man has been maintained. She thinks that man is consumed by a desire to possess woman, but she seems to be indomitably powerful with her procreative function. Reduction of woman to, the feminine and the mother to the reproductive function of the maternal body results in abjection of the maternal body as well as abjection of the woman, the feminine and the mother (Oliver 156). Madam Wu explains patriarchal oppression thus:

He could not possess woman who was already possessed by a force larger than his own desire.

Had she not created even him? Perhaps for that he never forgave her, but hated her and fought her secretly, dominated her and oppressed her and kept her locked in houses and her feet bound and her wrist tied, and forbade her wages and skills and learning, and widowed her when he was dead, and burned her sometimes to ashes, pretending that it was her faithfulness that did it. (Buck, *The Pavilion of Women* 259)

On one hand, there is this interpretation of woman's distance from man. She is in the grip of life force to perpetuate the species and tries to employ man to perform this job. She binds him to matter, life and responsibility. He avenges by imprisoning, controlling and torturing woman. On the other hand, there is another kind of psychologisation of man's nature: it is he who cannot satisfy woman at emotional, intellectual and physical levels, for his mind goes astray to find some other kind of interest. It may be other women as in case of *Mandala* and *Other Gods*, or some other objective, lofty or profane, for example, religion in *Exile* and *The Time is Noon* or business and money, in *The Long Love* and *The Hidden Flower*.

Susan hates the feminists like Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Her sole objective in life is to find a mate. Her contention that "women like that have set us back so far with men that we can't mend the damage" (Buck, *Voices in the House* 21), puts the cause of women's suffrage into question (*Oppapers.com*). She argues with her father who himself is a believer in sexual equality. It mortifies him to see "how single-mindedly she pursued her quest of a mate. Surely Elinor had not

been so obvious or so determined” (Buck, *Voices in the House* 20). The hater of sexual equality and believer in masculine superiority, Susan undergoes a process of disillusionment. The romantic girl is replaced by a mature woman soon after marriage. Susan, who once extolled the power of her huge husband, verbalises her realisation of man’s inner weakness in contrast to his physical strength:

What do you think my Peter is? Not a rock, if you please, not a shelter, but a confused rough child, a boy who is so big he has to shave his beard by day but at night he is afraid of the dark. I don’t mean really the dark, not anything as simple as that, but afraid of knowing what he is, ignorant, crude and empty inside. (Buck, *Voices in the House* 212)

Kit Holm and Susan Ashley soon learn that the giant-looking masculine men they got attracted to are not strong. Instead of giving support and shelter, they themselves need support and security. Without Kit and Susan, Bert and Peter are, in a way, homeless and helpless. Bert Holm survives as an American hero with the efforts of Kit and her family. The myth of man as the giver of security, shelter symbolised by their masculine strength, is debunked in Pearl’s fiction.

In *Madala*, Moti is warned by her mother against the danger of loving a man too much. She is advised to find transcendence in music, poetry or some other art that can keep her mind diverted from man. Moti’s mother considers men naturally promiscuous. “When dog sees a rabbit his jaws quiver and his saliva runs” (Buck, *Mandala* 15).

Women often consider men as promiscuous and obsessed with the gratification of carnal desires. Pearl S. Buck's novel has male characters who look more like beasts rather than human beings to their female counterpart, for example Bart Pounder (*The Time is Noon*), Herbert (*Voices In the House*) and Lewis Hinkle (*The Long Love*) or a little promiscuous ones like Bert Holm (*The Other Gods*) and Jagat (*Mandala*). There are full-blooded women characters who spend their time in the dream and search of the best possible partner as Joan does in *The Time is Noon* or who revel in objectification of male body as Lucinda Delaney and Kit Holm do. Among such male and female characters, generalisation about the other sex in essentialist terms is very common.

Pearl adds some comic element to *The Promise* by the incident of a Chinese merchant married to a young Burmese woman who creates much fuss about the paternity of his son delivered in the difficult times of war. Instead of feeling relieved at the safe delivery of child in a situation when medical help is almost impossible to get, he makes an absurd demand that the child must have a mole on its left ear as a proof of his paternity. It is the woman's luck that the child really has that unlikely mole in his left ear. The woman would have persecuted, in case the man could not be sure of the child's paternity. It is symptomatic of male insecurity about his procreative power, which is to be functionally secondary to female role. "The fear of the archaic mother," Kristeva maintains, "turns out to be essentially fear of her generative power. It is this power, a dreaded one, that patrilineal filiation has the burden of subduing" (174).

*Imperial Woman* presents a case of gender-ambiguity and gender-bending also. It is achieved not only, through the character of an effeminate man that the Son of Heaven is, and a powerful woman Tzu Hsi, who eliminates anyone that comes on her way to power, but also by the eunuch characters who serve the residents of the Forbidden City. They are empowered by their gender-ambiguity (Alexeyeff). The presence of the eunuchs inside the Forbidden City, after the sunset when all the men are ordered to leave the palace premises, is due to the ambiguity in their sex/gender role. They wield power over the Dowager Mother as well as the Prince in a surreptitious and sly way. Yehonala has to bribe her most powerful eunuch so that he mentions her name to the Dowager Mother and paves her way to the chamber of the Son of Heaven. The eunuchs are the king/queen makers. On the other hand, the Son of Heaven, despite his much celebrated and protected masculinity, does not have information about her favourite concubine, Yehonala's clandestine affair. However, the chief eunuch is in a privilege-position to know and arrange the meeting between Yehonala and her childhood fiancé Jung Lu. Here is a cross-class and cross-gender power positioning of the eunuchs who are sometimes as powerful as to make or ruin the lives of those living within the walls of the Forbidden City.

The perceptible change in the women's role came about in China with a nationalist feeling and Nationalist movement. Women with a higher purpose to serve the nation were supposed to come out of the four walls. At the same time, with the influence of modernisation and interaction with the West, women started asserting their individual will. With the call of the nation at the time of

Japanese onslaught and a seismic movement towards a great war provided them the opportunity to assert their usefulness outside the confines of four walls and find more meaning and sense of fulfilment. They denied giving heed to their traditional role and function they had to perform in marriage, housekeeping and procreation. Set at the time of WWII *The Promise* recounts the perceptible changes in women's role at a time when China was politically, torn between the inner fast-paced Nationalist-Communist revolution and the tectonic shifts in the world political map. Mayli a young Chinese woman educated in America, feels her nation calling at the time of WWII, and decides to do some work for her country even by participating in war with the Allied forces of Britain and America against the Japanese. Her wet nurse calls her "a wilful rootless man-woman sort of thing" (Buck, *The Promise* 70) and instructs her: "The only decent woman is that who is wed to a man and is behind walls and made the mother of his children" (Buck, *The Promise* 70).

Mayli is portrayed as an independent woman who is not wrenched and made weak by her love for a man. The wartime situation does not let the lovers think about themselves much. Moreover she herself is not sure that her attraction towards the tall man "for whom her flesh longed" (Buck, *The Promise* 15) will lead to their mental compatibility and lifetime partnership. She finds the man to be immature and still in the process of growth. She knows that her intelligent mind demands independence and will not be satisfied just with carnal gratification. Her intellectual and emotional needs may remain unfulfilled. Therefore, she does not thankfully accept the marriage proposal from her object



of desire. The following conversation that takes place between them at the time of one of his umpteen numbers of proposals, traces what Mayli thinks and feels about marriage and the inequality it leads to in the partnership:

“I swear I think you are still growing,” she said willfully.

“Can you blame me that I do not want a growing boy for my husband?”

“I do blame you for not wanting me,” he said gravely. “I blame you because you know that we are destined for marriage. Do not our horoscopes promise us to each other? Are you not gold and I am fire?”

“But I will not be consumed!” she cried.

“I am the man,” he said, “and you are the woman.”

The air was so clear, so still, the sunshine so pure, that their two shadows lay on the white stones beneath their feet as though they were one. She saw the closeness and stepped back from him and the shadows parted.

“Go away,” she said. “When you are finished growing you may come back.”

He gave her a long look, so long and fierce that she stamped her foot. “Don’t think I am afraid of your eyes!” she cried.

“Don’t think I am afraid of you,” he said sturdily, and  
turned and without another word he went away. (Buck, *The  
Promise* 14-15)

The beneficiaries of the saying “Boys will be boys” have an incentive to believe in it. Nevertheless, social agents, irrespective of their sex usually uphold the proverbs, ensuring more freedom and relaxation for one sex at the cost of another. Mayli is a new woman who can only be paired and satisfied with a grown up man with her level of maturity in thought and behaviour. Kit, Mayli’s American counterpart in *Other Gods*, detests her juvenile husband and hates the idea of mothering a man. She feels attracted towards Norman, as he is intellectually sharp and needs no maternal care. Dejected by him, she accepts Bert Holm’s proposal for marriage. Despite his tallness, he emerges out to be in a primal state of being. She is forced to take care of him. In the above quoted extract, *The Promise* uses the symbol of fire for man and that of gold for woman, which postulates that woman is pliable and malleable according to the requirements of man. Mayli refuses to be so and tries to find her meaning by rendering her services to her nation. Ironically, her passion for the man is shown to be strong but her farsightedness warns her against her future subjugation to her ‘object’ of desire. She has affinity with the character of Yehonala, who in fear of future embitterment does not marry her lover/beloved. When man is in love, he tries to hold and imprison his beloved, while a woman in love is supposed to be captivated and imprisoned by man. *The Promise* traces the thought processes of the female protagonist’s mind that is busy in an attempt to escape a possible

imprisonment and subjugation. She loves to find and not to lose herself in love, even though it means sacrificing her instinctual desire. She wants to be recognised as a human being; her humanity acknowledged before her womanhood and is satisfied when she meets the Chairman, the Nationalist leader, "That she was young or a woman or beautiful meant nothing. What she was thinking meant everything" (Buck, *The Promise* 55). Despite being a young woman, she does not give in to her attraction to Sheng. Though her concept of love is still traditional and she would like to join a man not in a casual manner as she think women are doing at a fickle time of war, but with a lifelong commitment. Sheng's mother has objection to their intimacy and disapproves of her son's meeting and loving her, though she is harsher in her criticism of the girl. To her, Mayli's being educated, her talking to the man and her unwillingness to marry him are marks of a lowly and unwomanly woman:

"I wish I had that third son of mine here and I would jerk his ears! When did a son of mine ever go smelling around a woman when she was not his wife? And she is worse than he is, to let him come near her, the bold daughter of a rotten mother . . ."

"Give over cursing, woman," Ling Tan said. "Why is it that women will curse each other so easily?"

"Perhaps she will not marry my brother," Lao Ta said. "You must remember, mother, that she is full of learning, and she does not know even his name on paper when he sees it."

But Ling Sao flung up her son. "If she has her belly full of ink, she is not the woman for him anyway," she said, "and all the more he ought not to go near her." (Buck, *The Promise* 5-6)

Ironically, Mayli has been brought up by her wet nurse and not by her mother as she had passed away after her birth. It is ironic and strange that the moral yardstick used for women is stricter. Women the custodians of morality curse and castigate each other. For Ling Sao, education for woman is unsuitable which makes woman unsuitable for marriage (Buck, *The Promise* 5-6).

When people curse each other, the female takes the brunt of their expletives. It becomes a great matter of insult if a swear word is about a female blood relation as they are supposed to be the repository of dignity and prestige. "...curse them and all their female parents!", "Mother of my mother of mother—" (Buck, *The Promise* 115-6) and the above mentioned "daughter of a rotten mother" are among the commonest expletives. The exclusion of the male parents is symptomatic of how much of sexual bias goes into the making of language and expressions.

Mayli's mind, is in a state of oscillation between the traditions of her country, and those of her foster country, modern America. Like Josui, she feels attracted towards the promise that America presents. As she has been educated in America, she feels nostalgic about the time she spent there enjoying her youthful gay days with American young men and women, flirting and making merry in an atmosphere of freedom. She feels attracted to the American soldiers her division meets while retreating in Burma. Pearl delineates how her mind feels

the pulls of the two worlds; one futuristic and liberal, is represented only by a faint promise of American help to defeat the Imperial Japan and the other traditional one of her homeland represented by the sadistic masculinity of Sheng. The stormy, cloudy sky into which the Americans disappear symbolically speaks of the elusive uncertainty of the American promise of military help as well as American dream of democracy and equality, which Pearl tries to question in her collection of essays *Of Men and Women*.

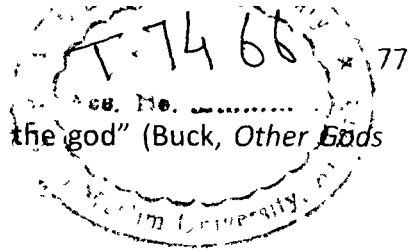
Kit gets into an unequal marriage, whence Mayli and Yehonala escape. Kit is intelligent and has made Phi Beta Kappa in her college of which her father is proud even "if there was no need of it for a woman" (Buck, *Other Gods* 16). Her life is cluttered with 'considerations' which forces her to stay with a man who in no way matches her in profundity of thought and action. He is pardonably selfish. He is devoid of a basic human trait—to imagine and understand others. His accidental feat ushers him into the limelight among the romantic American hoi polloi. Nonetheless, it does not endear him to his wife. Kit Tallant or Kit Holm has almost all kinds of capital that makes her a respectable woman in the American society; "money, place, education" (Buck, *Other Gods* 214), yet she has an agonising and tormenting lack in her inner being, due to want of a companion.

Unlike Yehonala or Mayli, she does not want any name or fame for herself. Her materially comfortable life as daughter of a successful banker makes her carefree of the essential needs, while her intelligence and acute sense of loneliness make her yearn for a soul mate. Norman Linley is her equal in sensitivity, awareness, intelligence and eloquence. Their meetings are full of

repartees wherein sparks of wit fly. They have mutual affinity and companionship as far as intellectual level correspondence is concerned. Norman Linley's sensitivity makes him realise the fact that as a man, he may not be able to satisfy Kit's emotional longings. Norman Linley's rejection of Kit leaves a mental and emotional void in both the characters. For Norman also, Kit is indispensable as she is a rare kind of woman with his level of sensitivity and intelligence. Kit's sense of vacuity leads her to accept Bert Holm who is handsome and talkative to break the oppressive silence in her life. Her relationship with Bert Holm is stronger at a physical level, but emotionally and mentally, they remain much aloof from each other. Kit feels this distance acutely since she is a sensitive human being. For Bert, crude and simple form of existence, which takes care of the physical needs, is satisfactory. He even learns how to enjoy the limelight and talk to the media. Kit's emotional longings are met with a blank silence from Bert Holm, which she interprets either as too much of selfish ingenuity or childlike ingenuousness. His simple existence "without the conscious sensitive integrity of a good intelligence" (Buck, *Other Gods* 392), as put by Kit, acquires a dimension that ensures his forward march as an American idol. As a public figure, he seems to be strong. However, inside he is entirely dependent on Kit and her family. Instead of alleviating Kit's loneliness, Bert's voice fills her life with a noise. What is lacking in Bert Holm is in abundance in Norman Linley. Kit and Norman can read, understand, refute and fulfil each other. Despite her marriage to Bert Holm, both of them strongly feel attracted to each other. However, after a long time of

oscillation between her options, Kit decides in favour of Bert Holm, what is, actually decided by the society.

In order to make her life simple and more comprehensible, Kit splits her personality into two. Her individual life, which wants to shut the crowd of the whole world out, has room for only an interactive companion. This life has its own demands. On the other hand, there is Kit Holm who needs to take care of a man entirely at the mercy of a fickle American hero-worshipping public. As suggested by her mother, she has to manage her husband. The lack of sensitivity in Bert Holm makes her conscience level twofold. However, she finally comes to terms with the fact that she has to stand by a man who is to remain a child. He can hardly be blamed for the lack more than a newly born child can be blamed for a missing limb. Kit is imprisoned by an image created for her by the society. She is a moral custodian or the complementary conscience for Bert Holm as Laura is for her husband. Kit along with her sister Gail, has no maternal instinct. Gail biologically brings forth children but fails to take care of them, as a stereotype of mother should do. Despite that, Kit is doomed to be mothering her juvenile husband. "The luggage of the soul which her mother called considerations" (Buck, *Other Gods* 410) denies her individual yearnings and longings. By accepting the gold medal from the League of American Homemakers, she fulfils "many faithful women, working obscurely in their homes" (Buck, *Other Gods* 429). Kit lacks what she needs to assert her individuality against a strong power called society. "She was no iconoclast. She



could not break into the temple and smash down the god" (Buck, *Other Gods* 428).

Did God really make women stupid to match men? (Eliot) It can further be added here that when they are strong and not stupid, men are left alone to sulk and fume. Mayli in *The Promise* does not want to be into an unequal relationship in which she needs to curb herself and bend down despite her intellectual superiority to Sheng. Her modern education does not allow her to get into a marriage in which she has to curb and crush her personality. She is not ready to lose her identity and be consumed. Sheng looks masculine with his tallness and huge size. Bert Holm of *Other Gods* charms Kit, despite her intelligence, with his masculinity. He is enormously strong. Kit, like her sister Gail, falls for Bert Holm for making her feel "so little –and helpless!" (Buck, *Other Gods* 40). Kit, at the same time, knows the hazards of giving into the attractions of a man with masculine body without an impressive intellectual prowess. She considers it fatal. "Women! There was a fatality in merely being a woman, perhaps. One succumbs sooner or later to femaleness" (Buck, *Other Gods* 40). She considers it an inevitable fate of woman to succumb to biology. Kit resigns and succumbs to this attraction of biological nature, which Mayli succeeds to curb. Brooke Westley feels attracted to the Indian Raja the Maharana of Amarpur, Jagat and enjoys "his male domineering", (Buck *Mandala* 271) despite the fact that she always hated women's dependence on men.



*Voices in the House* produces another example how romantic relationships involve delicate women and macho men. Pete comes back from the war at Pacific. Despite his low class background, he appeals to Susan with his masculinity. He is huge and strong like Bert Holm and Lewis. The stereotype of romantic relationship between strong chivalrous men and delicate women, smacking of sadomasochism seldom leave any one even the victims unaffected.

On the contrary, Jessica, a servant woman, hates her beast-like husband. She appreciates refinement more as it appeals to her as a form of capital. Herbert rapes her in marriage, in order to tame her without any success. Jessica's plight reveals in her madness. After her dog, a shield she used to keep Herbert away, dies, she is defenceless and starts barking and walking on the hands and legs. Hers is a desperate attempt to protect herself from the onslaught of an uncouth man.

Pearl's fiction is replete with examples of unhappy marriages. She often depicts women in devastating loneliness, dissatisfied especially at emotional and intellectual levels. Joan, Mary (*The Time is Noon*), Carie (*Exile*), Kit (*Other Gods*) Madame Wu (*Pavilion of Women*) and Madame Liang (*The Three Daughters of Madame Liang*) are women who want more than mere physical union with their husbands. Their longings are at emotional and intellectual levels. Joan, as a child, overhears their parents' talk in the night, her mother asking for more from her husband. Mary seems to be wondering at how little her preacher husband can give her. Joan cannot adjust with a silent and hardworking farmer who is like a beast in his carnal desires. Kit's yearning is of

emotional as well as intellectual nature, which is not fulfilled by Bert Holm. The novels reveal the inner agony of the female characters, from their perspective. Men mostly suffer the same isolation at home for wives' lack of understanding, knowledge and information. Their lives may possibly become more endurable if they chose to have or believe women being stupid. They suffer from what Kit suffers, lack of an understanding and intelligent collaborate which becomes less unbearable by their fulfilment in the outside world. Alternatively, they face Norman Linley's agony after he strips all his needs off himself including his emotional and intellectual longings in pursuit of a mirage called freedom. The husband in *East Wind: West Wind* remains lonely until his wife agrees to learn of the modern ways.

*The Good Earth* evidences that woman is bound down to the second-class status even when prosperity comes in the life of her husband. She remains object with no will of her own asserted and fulfilled. Man acquires power, while woman is a source and repository of capital. The novel recounts the story of acquisition of private property by a man and a parallel establishment of a family with the man as its head and the woman relegated to the position of a labourer. The class trope works well in the analysis of the position of man and woman in the novel. The analogy between the bourgeois and the man, and the proletariat and the woman seems to be sustainable throughout the novel. "The first class oppression coincides with that of the female sex by male, thus legitimating the familiar equation of husbands with the bourgeoisie and wives with the

proletariat" (Engels 69). *The Good Earth* yields to this equation with a sustainable validity.

In the ascent to power and money, Wang Lung is helped by O-lan. Instead of being a burden on his resources, she always finds a way to save money as much as he alone could never do single-handedly. The story of the rise of Wang Lung in social-status is a story of the rise of a feudal family or capitalism at a microcosmic level. O-lan is an ideal labourer for the capital to help it increase and acquire power and establish itself on a safe ground. "If total value of the things the worker has made exceeds the value of his or her wage, the aim of capitalism has been achieved. The capitalist gets the cost of the wage and an increment—surplus value" (Rubin 535). In a matter-of-fact way, the author describes how the woman who is a slave in the House of Hwang, is awaited by Wang Lung the day he was to be married to her. The first thought that comes to his mind in the morning is that "this was the last morning he would have to light the fire...Now father and son could rest. There was a woman coming to the house" (Buck, *The Good Earth* 3). O-lan' labour produces saleable commodities, which makes Wang Lung rich, while she claims only subsistence amount of expenditure. In another sense of labour, which is biological, she produces sons with minimal participation of Wang Lung. Symbolically, Wang Lung assists her in childbirth by getting her a slit reed to cut the umbilical cord. Thus by bearing sons who are going to help Wang Lung hoard and grow as a founder/patriarch of a wealthy/feudal family, O-lan performs her duty as perfect labourer that the capitalist patriarchy can dream of.

As claimed by Engels, pre-capitalism historical tradition decides that man talks and has a direct and more conspicuous access to God and religious transcendentalism, while women have a secondary position in the matters of religion as in the matters of money. Paul is the representative of God in *The Time is Noon*. The hard work Mary does in the household by living frugally and saving money for the children by wearing discarded shoes of her daughter is not as much acknowledged. Her husband declares her saving as theft. Her daughter Joan witnesses the condemnation of close to death, bed-ridden mother by the father and the helpless cry of her soul, denied fulfilment and transcendental solace: “I stole it? Slaving for you and your church all these years? Never having anything for my own—never anything—anything—anything--?” (Buck, *The Time is Noon* 82). Finally, the hard-earned saving is put into Paul’s missionary enterprise for the black in the South end.

Paul belongs to the religious class wherein women especially the defiant kinds like Mary are looked down upon as deviant souls. For women defiance comes more naturally and easily as they are scripturally condemned and incriminated.

*The Good Earth* is often remembered by the readers for its venturing into the description of childbirth considered to be bowdlerised and euphemised for the refined and sensitive reader. The famous scene in which O-lan, gives birth to a son without the help of any midwife is full of violence and may evoke repugnance in a prudish reader. There is a simple message here. There is no shame attached with the description of the process of birth, as there is no harm describing death:

both are unpleasant, painful, and full of violence and both may involve bloodshed. There is no other way but by pronouncing defilement and conspicuous avoidance that the awe striking work of procreation can be undermined. So, the society takes recourse to it. Such topics bowdlerised and swept under the carpet makes it easy for us to turn our eyes away from a natural phenomenon, which involves (or involved in the past before the medical science advanced in obstetrics) threat to human life. O-lan pants like an animal, but keeps Wang Lung away from the unpleasant sight of pain and blood. By remaining outside the door in waiting for the news of son being born, Wang Lung misses the chance to actively participate in the act of creation and remains content with minimalistic involvement. Patrilineality later asserts and covers the loss. Wang Lung's father reminisces that many children were born to his wife out of which Wang Lung is the only survivor. Thus, the father opines that a woman should bear recurrently. *The Dragon Seed* shows men's talk between the sons of Ling Tan as they discuss the sexual act in comparison with transplanting seedlings in the earth. Women's bodies are mostly "defined almost exclusively in terms of sexuality and reproduction" (Prescott).

The metaphor of earth for women is recurrent in Pearl S. Buck's novels. *The Good Earth* establishes this analogy strong with a quiet and fertile woman for a wife and a farmer possessive and acquisitive about land for a husband. The woman produces and reproduces. Wang Lung finds her and the infant she suckles during her work in the field as made of mud. She hardly communicates and he hardly ever tries to know her and understand her as a speaking human being. In

*The Pavilion of Women*, Madam Wu ponders between the essential difference between the procreative roles of man and woman. To her mind, Heaven is responsible for giving “seed to man and earth to woman” (Buck, *The Pavilion of Women* 36).

Among the customs that seem to have been constructed to keep women loaded, laden and confined into a narrow space is foot binding. It is a custom in China (now banned) that Pearl S. Buck takes up in many of her novels, demonstrating that it was a form of female subjugation. It was easy for her to know the Chinese custom well as she lived in China almost half her life. She socialised with the Chinese. Foot binding distorts the feet of women and gives them pain. It was a custom practiced by women from an andro-centric point of view; it was perhaps practiced either to enhance female beauty or sexual pleasure for men (Victoria). It can be found in different incarnations in various times and cultures. “Many people ask why Chinese women would disfigure their feet --but are they that much different from Victorian women with their dangerously tight corsets? Or modern women who teeter along on 6-inch stiletto heels, or who choose face-lifts or breast implants?” (Wu). Pearl S. Buck finds similarity between foot binding and dangerously tight corsets worn by the women in the West. Despite her becoming a butt of ridicule among the girls in the Randolph-Macon, Virginia, Pearl S. Buck refused to wear corset as she found it much like foot binding. Among many theories that try to explain 1000 years of foot binding in China, it is said that foot binding as a custom began towards the end of the T'ang Dynasty (618-906). It became a popular practice in the upper

classes during the Song Dynasty (960-1297). During the span of the next two dynasties, Ming (1368-1644) and Ching (1644-1911), foot binding became a popular practice throughout mainstream China. The only groups to disregard its practice were the Manchu (nevertheless Manchu women wore high-plat formed shoes to appear as if they had bound feet), the Hakka settlers and the poorest of peasants. Eventually, foot binding was prevented by law in the 1911 Revolution, but not before over a billion women had gone through the binding process. "A saying of the times was that an ugly face is bad luck, but big feet are due to neglect" (Victoria). Women with unbound feet in China felt lucky or unlucky depending on what they internalised as a part of their conditioning. Peony feels free with unbound feet and happy that she is a bondmaid not in a Chinese but in a Jewish house: "Had she been in a Chinese house her feet would have been bound small as soon as it was sure she was to be pretty, so that if a son of the house were to love her and want her for a concubine, she would not shame the family by having feet like servant's" (Buck, *Peony* 25).

O-lan does not have bound feet for being unattractive and becomes more unattractive for the lack of midget feet, therefore is expected to be a virgin despite her being a slave in a feudal family.

*East Wind: West Wind* tells the story of a woman's experience whose bound feet cannot please her doctor husband educated in America. Written in an epistolary style, the novel captures the nuances of thoughts and feelings a traditional Chinese woman has after her marriage with a doctor educated in America. Kwei-lan expresses her sense of bewilderment at finding herself caught

between the traditional Chinese social norms and modern world emerging under the influence of the West. She is trained by her mother in all the womanly ways e.g. in the art of pleasing her husband and her mother-in-law. Kwei-lan perceives that despite lacking beauty, (Kwei-lan's applies the Chinese yardstick of female beauty in her assessment of beauty) her American sister-in-law is more individualistic or at least self-confident and does not care for the subtle nuances of gestures and manners to attract men's attention:

. . . she is not beautiful . . . She does not trouble herself. She accepts as right the interest of men. She makes no effort to win their glances. She seems to say, "This is I. I am as you see me. I do not care to be otherwise." (Buck, *East Wind: West Wind* 178)

Kwei-lan is taught to be obedient and quiet whether she is treated with kindness or cruelty. Most importantly, she is made to feel proud of her tiny feet that are a result of years of pain and endurance. She sacrifices her childhood days in pain, her bound feet gave her, just in order to earn a few words of praise from her husband whom she considers her lord. The enlightened husband demands her feet to be unbound. Being a doctor, he unbinds her feet himself. The process of unbinding causes as much pain as the binding process had given her. She weeps for the futility of all her sacrifices. Her husband is contemptuous to the old constrictive customs: "He was making useless all the sacrifices, and even demanding a new sacrifice" (Buck, *East Wind: West Wind* 84). For the husband, the unbinding of the feet is an iconoclastic move against a tradition that renders women slow and less active. It is a step the husband and the wife take together



into future to bring about a change, which gives them a sense of camaraderie and intimacy.

In pre-Revolution Chinese culture, feet were the focus of erotica. It also meant to serve the purpose of keeping the movement of women restricted. S. Victoria quotes the 17th century author named Liu-hsien: "Girls are like gold, like gems. They ought to stay in their own house. If their feet are not bound, they go here and there with unfitting associates. They have no good name. They are the defective gems that are rejected." Thus, bound feet had a moral significance to ensure that women stayed chaste.

One notable personality who aided in the spread of foot binding was the famed writer and scholar Zhu Xi (1130-1200 A.D.), whose commentaries on the Confucian classics would form the canon of Neo-Confucianism that would dominate Chinese intellectual and philosophical life for six subsequent centuries. An ardent advocate of foot binding, Zhu Xi, introduced the practice into southern Fujian in order to spread Chinese culture and teach proper relations between men and women, greatly influencing other writers who mention the practice as if it were normal (Vento).

The first person narrator of *East Wind: West Wind* enters her husband's Western and alien looking house away from her in-laws is struck not only by the strange looking interior, but also by the claim of the husband that she is his equal and that her bound feet are ugly. Her mother is sure that he has knowledge of some Western magic to know how her feet which are never revealed in anyone's presence actually look from inside. The achievement of the author in this novel is

her almost flawless empathy with the innocent young Chinese woman. The narrator-protagonist expresses her ignorant anguish over her husband's queer demands and appeals for sympathy from the addressee. The unbinding process should ideally be a moment of emancipation. Ironically, it is a forced emancipation resembling the case of the slaves in *The Angry Wife*, who are accustomed to a life of slavery and mental slumber. The doctor husband cares for her as one would care for a child. She gains the importance and attention from him, which her training, pruning and straitjacketing could not bring. However, unlike her husband, Kwei-lan has no progressive idea behind her painful unbound feet. She is still doing whatever her husband demands, just to earn his attention and love. If she could not achieve her husband's favour by traditional ways then let it be done by some novel and radical way. Her life revolves around her husband. She wants to please him by making her feet look as large as they could be, and by giving him sons. Without the unbound feet, Kwei-lan could never get close to her husband to perform her biological destiny, which is to her, her *raison d'être*, of producing heir for her husband.

To normative patriarchy, humanity is man. For Kwei-lan as well as an educated Japanese girl like Josui, the foetus in the belly is male. It will be a girl, provided, the son turns out to be a girl by some misfortune. Pearl s. Buck's novels discuss the importance of sons and devaluation of girls, which can hardly be overemphasised in culture-specific contexts. In *The Good Earth*, sons are taken to be not only added hands to work and earn on the father's farm but they are supposed to be harbingers of good luck also. The time of famine coincides with

the birth of girls and Wang Lungs feels that bad times are ahead. The only thing that makes O-lan feel proud of herself is the fact that she is the mother of sons. Kwei-lan in *East Wind: West Wind* believes with ardour that when she bears sons for her husband, her *raison d'être* is achieved. In comparison to her Asian characters, Pearl S. Buck's American characters value girls at par with boys. Kwei-lan's American sister-in-law has three sisters and answers to her question and wonder thus: "No, but it does not matter. We do not care only for our sons" (Buck, *East Wind: West Wind* 226). In China, on the contrary, a concubine can be added if wife fails to bear sons as *The Three Daughters of Madame Liang* demonstrates. After three successive daughters' birth, Madam Liang faces the arrival of a concubine in her household. *Imperial Woman* discusses the celebrations that follow a son's birth in the palace. If a girl is born as twin to son, she is killed with the superstitious belief that the girl may "sap the life of her royal brother" (Buck *Imperial Woman* 58). A seven-day grand festivity in the entire kingdom follows the birth of the 'Son of Heaven'. There is a public feasting. All the prisoners whatever their crimes, are freed. No shops are opened and no living being killed even for food. Caged birds are freed and the banished men of rank can come back and claim their ranks and lands (Buck *Imperial Woman* 73). A concubine who bears a son acquires the legitimate claim of respect and family status. *My Several Worlds* reports and discusses female infanticide. Out of eleven women in a small gathering of friends in China, at least two confessed in Pearl's presence, to have at least one instance of female infanticide in their families. The

order was given to the midwives before the delivery either by the husband or the mother-in-law (Buck, *My Several Worlds* 164-5).

In *The Hidden Flower*, a Japanese doctor, brought up and educated in America with a place among the intelligentsia of the society thinks about his daughter as “a burden, precious beyond any other, and so the heavier” (Buck, *The Hidden Flower* 6).

Madam Liang, being a western educated woman, does not tolerate the humiliation of her conjugal happiness disturbed by the arrival of concubines. She demands a good business set-up that she enjoys to run and walks out on her husband. The chief character of *Pavilion of Women*, Madame Wu wants to stay away from her husband in order to find more time for her individual self. Understanding her husband’s physical needs, she allows and arranges for concubines. It leads to an insatiable hunger in the man who thankfully welcomes his new liberation to have new bed-partners. Concubinage, in this case becomes a way of escape or transcendence for the woman.

The “steel strong” Madame Wu (Buck, *Pavilion of Women* 32) reads books and interacts with a Western missionary “who preaches a creedless humanitarianism” (Conn 303).

Madam Liang has the strength and integrity of mind and character. Her religion is a mild hedonism in the face of national discipline and austerity. She is well educated and had been an enthusiastic revolutionary with the Nationalists. Despite the fact that her father keeps concubines and causes a permanent scar in the memory of his wife, he looks much progressive and ahead of his times, in the

matter of his daughter. He rescues his daughter from the pain of foot binding which her mother inflicts on her. Women seem to be better trained in preserving the patriarchal norms. The purpose of begetting a girl is to prepare her to please her husband and to remain restricted within his harem.

Pearl discusses sexual bias and marginalisation in cultural specific social contexts. While restricted movements, female infanticide and foot binding are symptoms of far Eastern patriarchy, chivalry, professional bias, religious and fascist patriarchies are signs of American sexual discrimination. Pearl talks about the bubble of American dream of equality. She bursts the myth in *The Hidden Flower* with the chief protagonist undergoing disillusionment about America as a dreamland of democracy and equality. Initially, for Josui living in Japan after spending in America the first fifteen years of her life, looks difficult. In America, as a child she is free to run, shout and make merry. Her attraction towards an American soldier is Buck's way to prove that In Japan, the culture demands a modesty, which restricts her free spirit and movement in literal senses. She is the repository of cultural capital with her good manners, aesthetic sense and respectability. In Japan, she spends most of her time in the art of decorating the alcove and making *Ikibana* (flower arrangement).

Her father did not understand and would not try to understand how much more difficult it was to be a woman in Japan than it was in America. When she thought of the girls in California as she remembered them, it seemed to her that they were young queens. But here the women were never queens. They were subjects,

waiting, doing their duty. It was doubtful that they would ever be queens, for when the Americans went away, her father often said, the old Japan would come back, or much of it. Then the young could not behave as they did now, he said. The Americans were like guests in the house. One was compelled to allow the children apparent freedom when strangers were presents, but when the guests were gone the children would be punished. (Buck, *The Hidden Flower* 14)

Josui follows her American lover and rejected by him. As a woman she had to be cultural and social capital for her father. By going with the American soldier she refuses to be so. She is rejected by Allen Kennedy as he realises the possibility of losing his legacy of economic capital of which he is the sole inheritor. She loses her identity whatsoever since she could not perform her role assigned to her by the patriarchal set up that she was a part of. Since the woman is to be transacted, her transaction remains invalid, as it does not take place between the male custodians.

The levels of women's emancipation are relative and specific to culture. Pearl S. Buck tries to look at heterogeneity in the concept and extent of women's freedom in Asia as differing from country to country. Women in Korea are supposed to be enjoying more freedom. Il-han's father has a complaint that Korean women enjoy more freedom: "... their [Chinese] women are kept in the house where they belong. In our country the women are too much for us" (Buck, *The Living Reed* 48). Il-han's father is in the service of the King while Il-han himself

is loyal to the Queen in their conflict of power. This difference reveals their generation gap in their attitude towards gender. Il-han is close to his wife more than traditional Korean husbands are.

Pearl S. Buck's Asian female characters are often portrayed as small delicate creatures. Sometimes they are shown to be victims of malnutrition. Josui is a petit beauty. The women in *Peony* are praised for being tiny and beautiful. Pearl projects Oriental idea of beauty lying in their midget like forms. Women's physical weakness is due to lack of proper nutrition. Their food mainly consisting of fish, rice and vegetables hardly makes them strong. The intelligentsia of Japan felt concerned about proper nutrition of women. They thought that women being weak produce weak children. It became a matter of shame for the country in the global community. Mrs. Sakai has bowed legs and bad teeth which she needs to hide from her husband. Mr. Sakai, having married the woman by looking at her picture sent to his family from Japan as a response of some advertisement, could never fully love her. He hates to look at her bowed legs, which makes Mrs. Sakai feel ashamed of her shapelessness. She is never comfortable under his gaze. The writer seems to be overemphasising it by repeatedly mentioning this in the novel so much so that we see only two bowed legs in Mrs. Sakai. Nevertheless, it clearly seems to be a manifestation of Pearl S. Buck's concern for the overall well-being of women who are not only neglected by others but also themselves.

Joan, during gestation, takes extra care of herself and despite her husband's family's wish to sell whole cream milk to city folks, she insists on having a good amount herself. Joan is very tall, rather huge. Her first lover calls her to be

a boy. Despite her misfortunes, she emerges out defiantly triumphant, as she is strong and healthy and can take care of herself and her family. After the death of all the members of her immediate family, she becomes the matron of the orphans of her brother and sister. At the same time, she does not forget to live as an individual. She awaits her dream partner whom Roger Bair, a pilot embodies. Such characters, with striking autobiographical affinity and kinship, are Pearl S. Buck's ideal female women, quite a number of steps ahead of her times but not too scornful, fearless but not cruel, strong individuals and yet friendly and social. They are independent and dependable, bold as well as charming, strong, full of life and life giving. To them, space and time belongs and the time remains noon.



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## *Class*

*. . . both literature and exchange [money representing commodities] are forms of structuring and imagining the world, whose relationship is sometimes complementary and sometimes contradictory. (Day 15)*

# Class

In the seventeenth century, the word class first entered Thomas Blount's dictionary *Glossographia* (1565) for the first time. It was defined as "a ship, or navy, an order or distribution of people according to their several degrees." (Day 6) Etymologically, the word class, often used as an attributive, derives from Latin *classis*, meaning group called to military service, fleet, or *calare*, to call and French *classe* ("Class."). In order to dislodge the clans and organise the society according to the importance of people, Servius Tullius (578-534) divided the society into *classes* (singular *classis*). This attempt marked a division between two major groups of people in the Roman society, the Patricians and the Plebeians, or aristocrats and commoners. (Day 3) Since then the plebeians have been perceived as subversive elements who worked from the margins threatening stability of the centre or the arbitrary authority of the Patricians, the mechanism of power ensured in various ways, that they remain well subjugated and powerless with justifications of their inferiority. Plebeians were conveniently supposed to be the workers whose bodies worked while their brains remained desirably non-functional. Almost the same categorisation was conveniently endorsed by Aristotle in the ancient Greek society. *Genos* meaning race and *mere* meaning category were manifested in two groups: *metics* (resident foreigners) and slaves. To Aristotle, *metics* were ruled by minds whereas slaves by bodies. After analysing the ancient Greek society, Gary Day further says: "The divisions between the various groups of ancient Greek society were based on birth and believed to be divinely ordained for the well being of society" (3). After accepting that the

society was arbitrarily divided unequally into master and slave determined by birth, Gary Day sounds contradictory to his own analysis of society as he adds: "There was thus no class structure in ancient Greece, but there were social divisions connected to categories of person, occupation and wealth" (3). Even if the think-tank did not consider this stratification as "harmful", (3) it is self-evident that the "divisions connected to the categories of person, occupation and wealth" are nothing but an incarnation of class structure with more or less material basis. Day discusses Calvert's vertical division between ecclesiastic and laity as distinguished from horizontal stratification between master and servant (4). This vertical division is also a euphemism for hierarchy and inequality. The ideal of equality tantalizes and eludes humanity. In addition, the reality tests reveal that division inevitably results in hierarchisation in one form or the other. By class, I mean inequality which underlies the dynamics of power in the society.

The rise of Capitalism was a result of Industrial revolution in England which became the basis for Marx's study (*Capital*). The rise of Capitalism led to the rise of bourgeoisie. The Eighteenth century England saw popularity of literature. Especially the genre of fiction evolved and became popular with the rise of the middle class. Therefore, it is an obvious inference as stated earlier, that literature and especially fiction has a relatively closer link with the structure of the society, though it may or may not be an expression of the bourgeois values.

Literature, perceived as an aesthetic expression and art form has been under control of those who have enough time and money to appreciate and patronise it. When bereft of its haloed and sanctimonious existence, it is among



various social discourses that may endorse and promote the upper echelon's interest or contradict it. It always subscribes to some ideology overtly or covertly. With the masses its relationship is also not always that of conflicting interests since the time of *Pierce the Plowman's Crede* (1396) which "challenged the clergy by claiming that the ploughman could teach the creed better than friars or monks"; and *The Plowman's Tale* (1400) that voiced the complaint of the ploughman against the clergy: "They have the corn and we have the dust". (Day 25) "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles". (Marx and Engels) However, there may not have been any unified class-consciousness and class struggle among the peasantry, then. Nevertheless, the peasantry and other toilers sensed injustice, deprivation and marginalisation and expressed themselves in literature. Thus the Marxist claim cannot be neglected to understand the social pecking order. Monarchy, feudalism, capitalism and, by extension of class as a trope, patriarchy and racism, all manifest class as a pivot of any discourse that tries to probe, assess and explain the hierarchical structure and disequilibrium in the distribution of power in social relationships.

According to Marx, the class structure is based on a key distinction between those who have and those who have not. Or to be more specific, between those who possess means of production and those who possess little or nothing. The first is called the Bourgeoisie and the second the Proletariat. Though it is a matter of common sense to refine this classification further by saying that social stratification is not just simply two-tiered; it is rather multi-tiered and very often, as this intersectional study probes, the stratification gets complicated and

problematised because of variables that may or may not directly have a material basis. Gender and race, for example, entangled with class give rise to complex situations and result in multiple jeopardy of some and manifold benefit of others. Marx explained the division or stratification in society on material basis, which generated much discussion and debate and led to much empirical and theoretical analysis of division of labour power in society among the social historians. The extent to which economic factor determines class structure has been an issue of discussion and debate resulting in finer theorisation and extension of the term capital. In the previous chapter, the different forms of capital as defined by Bordieu have been discussed. The second important question is how this structure is legitimised, reproduced and maintained. The all pervasive and as a part of common sense, though not always in black and white, ideology is at the root, working to ensure the hierarchical status quo in the society. It may work in social discourses, making the production, maintenance and reproduction of the same kind of power and class structure possible. At the same time the ideology of the dominant in the society is threatened by unsettling, unorthodox or rebellious voices heard in various social discourses. This key term is most important element to understand the social system, be it a "racial system" for example apartheid in South Africa and slavery of the Black by the European white, or the "gender system" which justifies marginalisation and subjugation of women. It is important to know, examine and scrutinise how the social malaises, whether they are sexual, racial, class based or any other umpteen number of parochialisms human mind can imagine, are repeatedly maintained and replicated in one or the other

form. The beliefs that the black are inferior to the white and that women are less intelligent, unable to take care of themselves or the working class is ruled by their bodies and have no mental prowess and calibre as claimed by Aristotle can rationalise, justify and legitimise their marginalisation and subjugation. Ideology perpetuates through various forms of social discourses.

In this study, the aim is to find the ways in which social stratification takes place and achieves legitimacy and how this objective reality becomes part of the subjective reality in the members of society, as manifested in and evidenced by Pearl S. Buck's novels.

The ongoing struggle on part of the social members to achieve the objectives that may range from mere survival to comfort, respect, longevity in terms of security of wealth, health and social status, motivate them to act and behave in a particular way. Here is an attempt to look at different individuals and societies divided by the Atlantic and the Pacific that are subject-matters in Pearl S. Buck's fiction, to see how different societies define their symbolic capital. The different factors or variables acquire importance according to the culture or social class a character belongs to.

Monarchy, feudal system and capitalism, various forms of classed societies come within Pearl S. Buck's gamut of work. Pearl's fiction ranges and covers the various forms of class structures at various points of history. In context of China, her range is wider, though, in America, her focus is the bourgeoisie. Her fiction represents the beliefs and values involved in creation of a particular order of society. Her novels are considerably important since she lived at a point of

time in human history when not only the individuals struggled to achieve power, but also the whole world was in its peak of power-struggle. The fiction of the writer concerned takes the stock of the situation and presents the society with all its contradictions, clashes and conflicts with a surprising ability to ensure scope of a little sympathy for all classes and orders. She condemns injustice and gives voice to the story of the seemingly silent downtrodden and lets them occupy the centre stage. At the same time, the upper class ensconced in luxury and comfort is given a chance to speak for themselves. They are projected as human beings and not totally as villainous characters. She is not among the radicals demanding a revolution. She rather believes in order with comfort of all the people in her mind. Her approach towards class struggle and divide is soft. It can be explained as her terrifying experiences in China at the time of Boxer uprising and communist xenophobic attacks as well as her all pervasive *joie de vivre*. Her close association with the lower class people in China enables her describe the workers and the peasants with commendable verisimilitude. Her bourgeois people are mostly from the Americans, though, there are some from China also. The range of characters as belonging to the uppermost and the lowest strata is from the Chinese. The most important point is that approach to the matter of class is descriptive and not prescriptive.

The term 'class' acquired prominence in the description of society in the early nineteenth century. (Day 115) In the American context the middle of the nineteenth century is very important as this is the time when class conflict intensified and the society saw the rise of Capitalism from the ashes of the Feudal

system creating another sort of Orwellian world that replicated many of the instances of power disequilibrium of the old world. Human trafficking was banned and abolished. Nevertheless, the industrialised society resulted into reification of human beings. I intend to use class as a general term not only to describe the Industrial and Capitalist society but also the old orders of monarchy and feudalism for the simple reason that in its various incarnations in different milieus and ethos, the basic and crude form of capital remains money as a simple determiner of power or lack thereof, for all kinds of classes for example sex or colour class.

While discussing novel, it would be appropriate to use Lionell Trilling's qualification of the novel as having a direct link with reality: a reality which is questioned and problematised. That novel evidences the reality by elucidating how money is important and what its symbolic implications are. "Money is 'the great generator of snobbery' or illusion (Rawling 30). Snobbery entails a false reverence for what the society considers as superior and produces the hierarchical structures it needs to survive. The function of the novel is to debunk the illusion, generated by snobbery, first by recording it and then exposing it (Rawling 30). Class and money are important considerations to understand the interaction between reality and illusion. Money is something which has direct link with reality as a necessity of life and with illusion as what Trilling calls "a generator of illusion" (qtd. in Rawling 30). The novel tries to penetrate into the facade of deception and explore reality (Rawling 30-31). This analysis of the function of the novel is paradigmatic in nature for critics of the novel form and I

find that for the work of Pearl S. Buck it is most suitable. Pearl S. Buck's fiction tries to find a harmony between illusion and reality that Trilling talks about. She misses class struggle paradigm and looks for a solution without abetting clash and conflict. Her position in the matter of class is not as radical as it is vis-a-vis gender and race.

Nevertheless, Pearl S. Buck's fiction abounds in examples of illusion and delusion of power created by money.

Pearl S. Buck's representation of the American society includes her characterisation from the elite, the bourgeoisie, the servants and the slaves and their reaction and behaviour at an individual level. The American class struggle, the North and South war at the time of Abolitionist movement, the shift of the society from feudalism to capitalism and the change in the fortune of individuals from slavery to wage earning working class find discussion at external and internal levels in the novel concerned. Her impression of Communism and its impact in China was not pleasant, and she has tries to expose the tyranny and hypocrisy of the Communist regime in her fiction, and yet, her sympathetic statements in favour of Communist tenets can be traced in her novels as well as her short stories.

Elizabeth in *Letter from Peking* is pining to be reunited with her lover. But as the anti-Americanism becomes stronger during the Communist regime, the reunion of the lovers becomes impossible. The lovers cannot have a heart-to-heart communication with each other as freedom of speech is curtailed gradually. The icy silence creeps into their relationship as the pressure to prove loyalty to

the Chinese government mounts on Gerald who is already under suspicion for being half-American. His motherland which he chooses to serve and devote his life to seems to turn into a claustrophobic prison that he cannot break. In one of his letters, Gerald mentions the purges the government executes in order to get rid of any suspicious move or voice of dissent.

Pearl S. Buck is well aware of the fact that all that human endeavours translate into is a partial realisation of the dreams of the ideals human mind sees and aspires to achieve. The intention may not be selfishly or diabolically inclined but the practical translation of the original ideals may be partial, mean, lopsided and even malevolent and malicious as a result of human egocentricity and biases and prejudices. The gap between the ideal and the real becomes the arena of the conflicts that provide the basic action for the dramatisation of the human situation she chooses to write on.

Pearl S. Buck's fiction is a good representative of American fiction that is informed by what Chase calls "contradictions of life" (Chase 2) resulting in a complexity of feelings, which are not assuaged by Cathartic tragedy or Christian solutions. The split, disorder and conflict in American experience are what a new Nation develops from its attraction, gravitation and reaction towards tradition and modernity, roots and wings, European ancestors and American progeny and siblings, acquisitive economics and abundance of new avenues and opportunities. Pearl's fiction represents the contradictions per se. Despite that, the conflict does not mar the atmosphere of general goodness, optimism in the novels.

Pearl S. Buck's fiction is full of the contradictions without any irritable attempt to reach at a simplistic and final resolution. She delays and suspends in the readers the desire to be judgemental and have a strict moral standpoint. Despite her missionary background, her fictive imagination never fails to let the various viewpoints whether traditional or progressive, liberal or reactionary, White Imperialist or Asian, the acquisitive capitalist or simply agrarian and proletarian speak in free and frank voices. Nevertheless, her sympathy for those sitting on the fringes, margins and peripheries peeps through her attempt to hide her proclivity and sympathy. In her fiction, human bias or meanness is often detected and well exposed without a plunge into strict and harsh diatribes. Her approach to what Bewley calls "benevolent wealth" (qtd. in Chase) and good things in life is reflected in her novels in form of her never-failing *joie de vivre*. Nevertheless, she is a caustic critic of the acquisitive leanings in the nations and its next stage, Imperialism.

Pearl S. Buck was actively involved to rescue the victim of racial bias and she is vocal with regard to sexual equality, but class is a matter that she does not try to touch upon directly at least in her non-fiction works. Her egalitarianism is better expressed in her alarming concern for the international power dynamics that showed favour to the acquisitive hawkishness in a Darwinian world. She criticises the aggressiveness, acquisitiveness and the Imperialist design of America in her essays. She condemns expansionist and acquisitive jingoism of the European power. In her novels, she wishfully hopes that her nation intervenes and participates just to help and not to plunder, at the time of a hawkish



atmosphere of the World Wars. She condemns the Imperialist power mania to establish hegemony in the international situation in her novels as well as her non-fiction works.

Pearl S. Buck was under the scrutiny of the FBI because she was vocal about the injustice meted out to the backward classes, ghettoed into the corners based on colour and gender. She expressed her proclivity for a classless society. However, she detested the tag of a Communist as she was not radical enough to qualify for it. She might have feared its concomitant incrimination and marginalisation by the American society. In her fiction and non-fiction writings, she tries to express her hatred for the Revolution that she witnessed and even had to bear the brunt of, in China. Nevertheless, her fiction does take care of what she attempts to sweep under the carpet of omission in her speech and essays.

Pearl S. Buck's a fictive world, despite revealing a detestation and fear of sudden violence of revolution, reveals the ugliness of the oppressive class divide. It is quite prominent in her works like *The Angry Wife*, *The good Earth*, *Voices in the House*, *The Three Daughters of Madame Liang*, *The Living Reed*, *Imperial Woman*, *Peony*, *The Good earth* and short fiction like "Home to Heaven" in *The Hearts Come Home* et al. At the same time, in her fiction and non-fiction writings, an ambivalence of attitude is to be perceived. In her novels, she has taken up the issues of slavery, the abolitionist movement, class struggle, class mobility, inter-class marriage and class based oppression, workers' uprising and market control etc in a nonchalant way. Often the class issue overlaps and coincides with the

other issues like gender and race, making the case studies more sensitive, poignant and thought provoking.

Pearl S. Buck examines the relationship between the classes in a variety of ways that does not let one conclude about her real position vis-a-vis class matters. She tries to look at social relations with a multiple-factors-approach that involves issues of race, gender, age, health or anything that may put a person at an advantage or the lack thereof. It does not mean in any way that class does not matter in her writings. It definitely does especially in the works mentioned above). Her fictive world like the real world is peopled by the rich and the poor and so many of them are aware of their economic disadvantageous position and some of them dare to blame the system, hold grudge against the rich and attack them to plunder. Her novels set in China show dehumanising effects of poverty. At the same time, like a true American she has written stories about individual efforts resulting into a complete change of fate and prosperity and her criticism of the system remains indirect, mild and steers clear of any full-throated diatribe of the wealth-distribution in the society. It can be explained by the fact that she wanted to avoid further marginalisation as she was already making ripples in the American scene by raising her voice for the coloured, the mixed race children and women. Ironically, despite all her efforts at being sensible regarding class matters, she was a suspect and the FBI kept her moves under their strict vigilance and scrutiny. (Conn 260)

In her fiction, Pearl S. Buck often reveals the detestation the natives had for the aspiring imperialist powers with free trade as its foundation, whether

European or Asian, whether they came with their Evangelical mission or trade or direct political involvement. *The Hidden Flower*, with the case of Japan after its surrender, *Imperial Woman* at the time of the decline of the dynastic rule but at the height of white xenophobia, *The Three Daughters of Madame Liang* in the Communist China and *The Living Reed* with Japanese onslaught as its theme have a common thematic grain: they all talk about anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist sentiments simmering in the people.

*The Three Daughters of Madame Liang* is an exposé of the hypocrisy prevalent in the post-revolution China, the blurring of the vision of equality and equal distribution of work and wealth for the progress of the Republic. The plot of the novel revolves around the lives of an entrepreneur Chinese woman having three daughters, whose business is founded on the love of delicacies among the leaders of the Communist regime. The Communist gourmets and money hoarding Madame Liang become complementary to each other. The novel projects the situation from the point of view of Madame Liang, a romantic revolutionary educated in Paris turned into a restaurateur who enjoys luxury to the core of her heart. Her simple dictum to follow in life is what her Confucian parents taught her: "life was meant to be enjoyed . . . and that equality was only the dream of inferior persons" (Buck, *The Three Daughters of Madame Liang* 14). Pearl S. Buck feels that Confucius texts are only of decorative value and has no connection with the masses of China; just the way sayings of Jesus are in the western countries. (Conn 142) Madame Liang listens to the interminable preaching of sacrifice and equality with docile attention but at heart she believes in an Orwellian world:

“There were stupid people and people not so stupid and a few not stupid at all. No government could change this eternal truth” (5). Madame Liang belongs to the upper echelon in terms of power as well as money. She has economic capital hidden in her house from the eyes of the rising class of peasants. She possesses cultural capital in form of her modern education, her aesthetic sense and physiological leanings, and social capital as she knows the ministers of the present Republic of China as her customers and old friends. Hailing from a wealthy family, she is educated in Paris where she befriends the revolutionaries as she also becomes one. She is married to “the arch revolutionary” Sun Yat-sen’s friend. After what she calls “the failures and disappointments of revolution” (20) and estrangement from her husband, she makes personal care and high living her sole motto in life. She believes in a selfish existence in isolation. The developments of a revolutionised country have no value for her as it only means curtailment of the luxuries of the upper class people who embody beauty: “. . .the people better fed, corruption wiped clean away, bridge built, floods controlled, even flies and rats gone—but beauty was dead” (21). She feels that not only the capital’s economic form is distributed and decentralised but its cultural manifestations also get diluted. In a world that is torn between the aims of People’s Republic of China and the American individualism and *laissez faire* policy, Madame Liang tries to pander to the sinful gourmets from amongst the leader-preachers of simplicity and Spartan life. From her sartorial style to the food she takes, every aspect of her life speaks of opulence and luxury. Her most gratifying moment is when she counts money at the end of the day. She has money in American banks and keeps

gold hidden behind cosmetics. The cotton robe she wears on top of her satin gown is a symbol of her hypocrisy. It also symbolises the incomplete nature of the Revolution.

The novel does not depict Madame Liang's existence as an ideal life. She is enjoying the luxuries of life which is marred by the constant fear of being spied on even by her servant. The atmosphere of constant fear is evoked by the precautions she takes and her old servant warns her of, against any possible threat. Even faint sounds of steps she hears or she imagines she hears make her think of approaching enemy. The class of people new to power feels inebriated with it. She is under a constant threat from the outside world. She is afraid of her shadow being seen from outside her house.

Madame Liang's being lynched by the end of the story is an evidence of the power of people who leave none spared. She finds her house sealed when she comes back from her daughter and finds "This capitalist house must be burned to ash" (311) written on the main door. She is lynched by some young men and children along with the pedicab driver. They are insensitive young zealots who do not care to spare even the driver who tries to protect Madame Liang. Their singing while they kill is a sign of their extreme insensitivity.

The novel describes the communes as a strange and weird way of living. Chao Ma, Madame Liang's old servant describes how her son and daughter-in-law start living in a commune turning their family life asunder. On one hand, it seems to mechanise and reify the lives of the people with the lack of human values and emotions. On the other, it is mentioned that it makes the life of the woman

easier. Chao Ma's daughter-in-law chooses to disband the family and join the commune. She is happy to have friends working in her commune. She perhaps has some sense of her sex-class and sexual equality by living in the commune. Chao Ma's description of the way her son and daughter in law are given sometime to be together in almost no privacy shows how communes try to mechanise copulation by bereaving human emotions from it. Chao Ma describes the mating place provided by the commune as a small room:

. . . with only a bed and with a curtain of blue cotton cloth, swaying in the wind, and there, outside a female comrade seated on a stool by a square table, she with paper and pencil, marking off what pair to what room, and shouting that each pair could be together but one half hour . . . On the wooden wall of each room there hangs a picture of Chairman Mao, two feet square, and so taken that his great eyes seem to move and see all that husband and wife do. Yes, my son told me. 'M-ma,' he told, 'how could I so much as touch my wife's hand when he watched me with such eyes?' (90)

The novel also describes the purges that the Communist regime executes to get rid of anyone who is under a little suspicion or has the courage to show dissent. Madame Liang's son-in-law, an excellent scientist is killed among many others. His widow with her son is sent to America to stay with her youngest daughter. Joy among the three daughters is a promising artist who is spared by the government, as being useless as an artist. Grace, an intelligent and promising scientist, is called and put to obey the Chairman to pursue Ancient Chinese

medicines. America the safe haven Madame Liang finds for her daughter cannot keep them, as Grace leaves America having not received the warning from her mother. Communication between the two countries is intercepted. After Madame Liang, only Grace among her daughters seems to be carrying on with the heritage of the old customs in China and family life by convincing Lieu Ping to marry her.

*The Angry Wife* takes up the issue of class division and the resultant oppression in the times of American Civil War of the 1860s. The feudal system crumbles down giving way to another system that replicated the old one in most of its evils. The change is in a well-concerted struggle of class witnessed in the new system. "The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones." (Marx and Engels)

*The Angry Wife* is set at the time when racial segregation and slavery are abolished after a prolonged civil war of 1850s and 1860s. It recounts the change of a feudal society into a capitalist one. Delaney family struggles to stay on top with an effort to invest and establish in the most lucrative railroads business at the suggestion of Lucinda Delaney, the wife of Pierce Delaney. Pierce Delaney participates in the war upholding the cause of the aristocratic class. Ironically, his younger brother, Tom fights for the abolition of slavery. The conflict of view within the same family between two brothers turns a national and political crisis into an emotional family drama. Buck's sympathetic leaning towards the Abolitionist movement is perceptible in her portrayal of the main characters.

Nevertheless, her sympathy does not exclude the Southerners as she delineates them as people who are helpless products of a feudal society naturally gravitating towards Capitalism. Though Buck's inclination towards a classless society is to be witnessed as she sketches the characters of the black slaves-turned-servants and the Abolitionist brother with more sympathy and exposes moral weaknesses of the estate-owning class.

Lucinda belongs to the category of wealthy women who do not have to work even at home, thus tries to perpetuate the hierarchical status quo to maintain her luxurious aristocratic lifestyle. She is more anxious to find a replacement for her old high class life-style and suggests her husband to generate money by investing into new business opportunity that is the railroads. She is very much concerned about their remaining on top, mainly because of the fact that being a woman she is the repository of the family's symbolic capital. In her attempt to do so she colludes with her husband, not only to oppress the male workers in the railroads but also to keep her female coloured slaves-turned-servants well subjugated at home. For her any kind of change is unacceptable. On the other hand, men are not shown to be so rigid. As the mistress of the house, she holds the position of power and respect in relation to the slaves. She has a total control over them and keeps them well-subjugated by making them take care of the lavish lifestyle of the family. She wants to ensure another cushion-tier under her in the absence of which she would be holding the secondary position in relation to men; a cushion-tier that will not let her fall to the lowest position in the family if not in the society. With any kind of change in the present situation,



as a woman she would be more affected. There is a threat to her position as an arbitrary employer-coloniser that it may slide down to employee-colonised position because of her sex: "She could not learn to call them servants instead of slaves. Pierce was going to pay them wages. Georgia her own maid would get wages!" (Buck, *The Angry Wife* 1) Besides as a woman, she is the repository of cultural capital of the family. Therefore, she makes sure that the household looks well maintained and aesthetically furnished even if it means that her personal servant Georgia has to stay up late at night to starch and iron her clothes. Lucinda is an angry wife at the status-change of her household employees, the change in their form of address from master to mister and her sense of insecurity towards the 'mulattoes' as they are attractive and she suspects that her husband is attracted to her personal maid Georgia.

For Pierce Delaney, form and order is more important than the freedom struggle or Abolitionist movement that finally leads to victory of the Republicans headed by Lincoln with its unpleasant by product, the divide of the union. To him, the bloodshed which is often a tragic yet necessary part of revolution looks unacceptable. Like the author, he may have preferred a more pleasant evolution and a gradual change in the fate of the oppressed by some wishful way sans bloodshed or a split in the Union into North and South. This kind of ambivalence borders on dualistic hypocrisy as Pierce Delany himself enjoys the comfort of an estate with an attractive, extravagantly furnished and arranged home and a well-kept stable.

After abolition of slavery and the South-North divide, Capitalism finds a conducive environment of *Laissez faire* in America to flourish and establish another form system with steeply hierarchical relationship between the members of the society. *The Angry Wife* analyses the situation even after the Abolition of slavery and records the uprising of the working class against the exploitative tendency of Capitalism arising from the ashes of Feudalism. The exploitation of wage-earning proletariat is different in nature in a number of ways from the exploitation of slaves. The exploitation and impoverishment of the railroad workers, as Engels says, create a class whose size, unity and consciousness of itself means that it would fight against the source of its oppression. (Day 114) The organised rebellion of the railroad workers under the influence of Communist ideas threatens the safe recourse taken by the Delaneys into railroad business. Pierce Delaney is an eloquent speaker with the motivating force of his wife. His family comes under the threat of the railroad workers and luckily gets safe passage that grants their lives. Edward in *The Long Love* senses a potential threat from one of his capable workmen handling printing, John Carosi who is into labour union pressing for higher wages. He is told that in the city they have already hamstrung the theatre at a frightful time when it has a tough competition from the motion pictures. John Carosi is criticised for being union-obsessed:

The small group of working men, dominated by a fiery boss, who was in turn at the command of a human machine, was the universe within which John Carosi lived. All the multiple affairs of mankind, hunger in Asia, a possible war looming in Europe, mounting cost of

living here at home—all these he saw simply from the point of advantage and disadvantage for his union. (Buck 263)

The classes pitted against each other seem to be a natural consequence of the threat that ingenious capitalism always carry within it. The possibility of workers' uprising is stronger than it is in slaves as the workers may find better opportunity to interact and develop a sense of unity in adversity resulting in their rebellion against their employers. They use strike as a weapon to jeopardise interest of the employer, who is dependent on the workers for production of commodities. The class fraternity and sympathy which can possibly arise in case of slaves as witnessed in the American history is quite a number of steps remote a possibility for the gender victims. Their becoming one sex class is necessary and yet difficult to come about and usually gets fractured by other factors of identity and classification for example, race, ethnicities, class and even people of alternative sexual preference. Capitalism has always a strong possible threat within its system against which it needs to keep devising new ways and techniques and it mostly takes recourse to divisive methods based on variables as race, nationality and ethnicity or even gender, by wielding power derived from economic or political colonialism.

In America, Pearl S. Buck sensed that even the smallest reasons as being sympathetic towards workers or having a link with or having lived in China could invite trouble. One can come under the government scanner or even be persecuted for any suspicion of communist leanings or even a partial affinity as Pearl S. Buck herself sometimes betrayed in her writings. In *The Time is Noon*,

Francis is thrown out of job as it is suspected that a person as rebellious as he is, should be a communist and be a potential pain in the neck of the authority. The author endorses the suspicion of a potential threat by the fact that among his few possessions “two little books about revolution and a book by Marx” (Buck, *The Time is Noon* 309) are also found after Francis dies. Francis is destined to die because he was against power and consciously or unconsciously has liaisons with colour and class underprivileged.

The boldest character, in Pearl S. Buck, justifying and working for communism is Il-han's younger son Yul-han. Their family belongs to the ruling *Yangban* class of Korea. Talking to his father who has influence in the palace and is a close associate of the Queen, he points his finger to his father's possession of lands: “I don't know how you have held our own land except that we are yangban, and you, too, had your special influence in court.” (Buck, *The Living Reed* 244) He recounts the concatenating historical situation for the revolution, pinning it to the misappropriation of public resources:

The corruption began long ago before your generation. Before you were born—or my grandfather was born—there was already no distinction between Court and government property or between State and private properties or State and Imperial household properties. Why do I tell you, Father? You know that magistrates collected taxes as they pleased and spent them as they pleased. Land tax—house tax---but have we ourselves ever paid taxes, Father? (Buck, *The Living Reed* 244)

The revolutionary spirit in the boy belonging to the high class *Yangban* is a new hope as well as a threat of destruction for the family and the society. The voice of dissent and criticism against the corrupt government officials and magistrates who misappropriate money and avoid paying taxes comes from not only the deprived outsiders but the sensitive as well as rebellious insiders also. *Imperial Woman* tries to present the commoners' interest and point of view. Tzu Hsi with absolute power and control of the national exchequer, levies heavy taxes on the people and gets palaces reconstructed and built. On one hand, the novel criticises her extravagance at the cost of public money, on the other, it praises her market watch to prevent food storage and control. Cho Ma's grandsons, after being indoctrinated at a young stage of life, get their father's plan to leave the commune and sail into another country with the family, busted. They call him traitor and get him arrested by the comrades.

Man's acquisitiveness, a prerequisite of the origin of private property is often seen as intertwined with the foundation of the family. Engels assertion that the origin of private property necessitated origin of family and vice versa can be found as the main theme of *The Long Love*. *The Long Love* (1949) traces link between a prudent and "cautious" man's desire to establish a family with a woman accustomed to a carefree and extravagant life. He has an urge to make it big by expanding his father's printing business into a publishing house. The declaration on its title page of a cardinal edition of *The Long Love* "The masterful story of a man and woman who achieved—through marriage" encapsulates the basic theme of the novel. Enveloped in the romantic clouds of love and

prospective marriage, "the acquisitive instincts" deepen in Edward Haslatt for whom "any impulse to share was secondary and acquired, implanted only by his sense of justice" (Buck, *The Long Love* 51). The thoughts of business and establishing their house germinate in the minds of Edward and Margret and they are not free of them even during their honey moon days. Edward's accumulative concupiscence and conviction in the establishment of a publishing house he envisions as a future expansion in his father and his partner's printing house convince his father to give in reluctantly to his new ideas. Ironically the fortunate break for his dream publishing business comes from a novelist-genius hailing from the under dogs of Edward's own locality, Chedbury. Lewis Hinkle self-rechristened to sound and sell better Lewis Harrow is the son of Chedbury's well-known ignominious couple with a drunkard for a husband and a laundry woman for a wife.

Haslatt and his partners are gradually taken over by the Haslatt family with the efforts of Edward and Baynes, who possess prudence and enterprise respectively. With the discovery of Lewis Hinkle-turned-Lewis Harrow, they flourish. With a kind of rawness in his personality and frankness in his talk, Lewis Hinkle embarrasses the whole of Chedbury as he delivers talk to launch his first novel. The local newspaper simply ignores him deeming him as belonging to low class below worth-mentioning, while his popularity reaches a magnitude which ensures Haslatts' change of fortune into successful publishers. The power struggle between the publisher and the novelist ensures that the relationship does not stay smooth and they go on together on a necessity basis. The class shift in Lewis

Harrow's fortune is perceived by the Chedbury society as well as the Edward Haslatt's family with an uneasy acceptance. He is perceived as a potential threat that the novelist is, to the class as well as family status quo. He combines the rawness of the working class with a finesse of a successful writer. Edward hates his intrusion into his house and somehow feels that he is a rival even at a personal level. Harrow's portrayal of an adorable female character with striking resemblance with Margret leaves Edward flabbergasted at the audacity of the writer. He must keep quiet since the writer's discovery establishes his entire publishing house. The achievement of the novelist is that she keeps the matter in suspension for the main character Edward as well as the readers with Harrow's character lurking as a threat to Edward's marital life. Edward's dependence on Haslatt in the matter of business disarms him against Harrow. However, Harrow manages to enter into Edward's relation and makes his class shift complete by finally marrying his favourite daughter Marry. Edward's brother-in-law Tom Seaton's marriage with the sister of Edward's employee John Carosi evokes a contemptuous reaction from his mother who finds it demeaning to be related to the commoners of the South Chedbury: "I never thought that we'd be connected with South Chedbury through the Seatons," she had said acidly." (Buck, *The Long Love* 263) Edward, for all his fondness for the simple Italian girl realises that this marriage is a "comedown" (263) for the Seatons.

The higher is the class and class-consciousness, the stronger self control is expected to be, which is a mark of higher civilization. Down the social ladder, civilisation gradually relaxes humanity more to express itself in a natural way.

Fioretta fills the Seaton house with three noisy rather spoiled but beautiful daughters by repeatedly cheating Tom who wants to remain childless. Fioretta can wail at the knowledge of Mark's death which is envied by Edward who cannot express his grief at his own son's death. Margret and Edward, despite being parents need to restrain and avoid any public display of their grief as per the demand of their class. In *The Time is Noon* Hannah is untidy and "ostentatious with grief" (Buck, *The Time is Noon* 100) at her mistress's death while the bereaved survivors Joan and Francis avoid crying in public. The husband is patience and stoicism personified as he is apart from others as a religious class. Paul is comforted by his transcendentalism, his missionary enterprise and zeal.

Lewis Harrow keeps offending Edward's family by his strange unchecked and uncouth ways, exuding raw and animal like sexual attraction for the females to which Mary, despite being brought up to be civilised and sophisticated, succumbs. Edward's remark on their having twins is not only unreasonable but also comic: "You shouldn't have married her!" he exclaims in utmost agitation to Harrow. "This is your—excessive vitality". (Buck, *The Long Love* 268) Class consciousness dilutes in the post-depression period of the 1940s. Haslatts ascribe their daughter's decision to marry Lewis Harrow to it. The sons of Marry and Harrow turn to be naughty as expected through their paternal genes. They start to "rough-house" (268) any moment much to the chagrin of their grandparents. They have a taste for comics and radio at which Edward is appalled. They hold up their grandparents on their way back to their home and demand money from them. At the Eagle, their house on top of hill built up by Harrow, they seem to be



living a life which must be more free and natural as compared to their mother's life in Holcombe's spacious old house under the strict and vigilant eyes of her mother with a view to order and aesthetic tidiness.

*The Other Gods* is the story of a man's sudden and freaky rise to celebrity status. Like Lewis Hinkle, Bert Holm makes his way up in social status. He becomes a celebrity with an accidental twist in fate. This novel also concerns inter-class marriage. The novel tries to study human psychology; human weakness and urge to find an icon to worship. Bert Holm, a mechanic from a farm background, catapults into fame by climbing up the Therat in the Himalayan ranges while his British leader, Sir Alfred Fessaday, a scientist, decides to stay back due to the sickness of some crew member. Mrs. Tallant, a famous and rich banker's wife "tolerantly" calls Bert Holm's class as "very plain people" (Buck, *Other Gods* 14) in the ironic ignorance of the future which unfolds Bert Holm courting and successfully marrying her younger daughter, Kit. Mr. Tallant feels slightly ashamed of the prospective marriage between his daughter and Bert Holm as his "rapid mind" tells him that things would not be easy for him with the jeers of his friends on his being "a skyrocket of a fellow", Bert Holm's father-in-law. Bert Holm's celebrity status is his symbolic capital, however temporary, which compensates for the lack of class in his background. The embarrassment and shame the senior Tallants feel are due to the fact that Bert Holm does not come from a wealthy and 'civilized' background, meaning to say, a family with cultural and social capitals along with economic capital. He is not educated much while Kit Tallant writes poetry. Though, their lives at a personal level suffer from a

lack of communication, they complement each other well in the public life. The Tallants with their social and economic capitals take care of a white elephant of a son-in-law. Kit teaches Bert Holm how to use a toothbrush, personal hygiene and grooming. Kit calls him a “grouch” as he refuses to pay enough tips to waiters. Bert Holm with his Adonis looks and celebrity status enter Kit Tallant’s life. Her loneliness after being rejected by the man she loves, leads her to welcome Bert Holm. Education wise, Bert Holm is suitable to be a doorman as Bert’s father himself suggests to Kit without any malice. In Tallant household Bert finds company with Smedley, the butler and goes out with him to have a good time of boozing beyond limits. For Kit Tallant, adjusting to Bert Holm’s parents and their simple life at the farm in Misty Falls proves impossible. The thought that she has to call them father and mother, outrages her “inner secret loyalty” to her own “kind”. They are not welcome at the Tallants house even when Bert falls sick. Kit takes an emergency trip to stop them from coming to Glen Barry for fear of causing embarrassment to the Tallants splendid household in the eyes of the media. Kit is class conscious. The embodied cultural capital in her creates in her physiological and psychological reaction to Bert’s house and his family and their lifestyle. She becomes more conscious of the beauty in her parental house after she visits the Holms in Misty Falls. Like Allen Kennedy of *The Hidden Flower*, she becomes conscious of atmosphere of opulence, good living, luxury and order after living without it. She defines her own kind or class as intellectually more active and emotionally more sensitive and “informed and stimulated by new perceptions” (Buck, *Other Gods* 78). She tries hard to adjust with the lifestyle of

her in-laws by collecting fruits and bringing milk and participating in various household chores. Despite her efforts to adjust with the “life of the body” extolled by Norman Linley, her mind craves for mental exercise and stimulants. Intellectual activity has no scope in Misty Falls’ elementary lifestyle. To Kit, mind is as important a part of human beings as hands are and needs active stimulants to stay alive. She is repelled by the idea of getting photographed with Bert Holm’s mother. Misty Falls people are shy before Kit who hails from a well-known wealthy and educated high class family. To Kit, Misty Falls common people look crude and uncouth. Like the uneducated Chinese in *East Wind: West Wind*, *The Good Earth* et al, Jack Rexall is shown to be spitting compulsively as it is his habit. The class divide between Bert and Kit is not only that of money and wealth but of education, intelligence, articulation, communication and sensitivity. The gap between them is more in cultural and social capitals that include education, social relations and refinement in taste and good living.

Bert Holm’s success story evidences the survival of the fittest theory. The definition of the fittest includes not only strength and determination but also a blind insensitivity towards others. Bert Holm is not a consciously cruel cutthroat competitor. He has a blind will power to conquer and win. He is what Kit feels “simply without the conscious sensitive integrity of a good intelligence, that was all. But conscious integrity was everything—the vessel which held all beauty. If there were no containing vessel, then there was nothing” (Buck, *Other Gods* 392). In his second expedition to the Pangbat, he is shown to be self-absorbed enjoying every moment of the limelight, managed well by the publicity agent, Mr. Brame.

At the final camp, he betrays his companion Ronald Burgh by quietly going alone to the top. He diverts from the path they had discussed and decided upon, finding the other route less dangerous. Roland Burgh follows the decided path and gets buried in the avalanche caused by Bert's slight push from the top. Bert's self-obsession does not leave him any scope for imagining and thinking about others. In his innocent selfishness, Bert brings the only oxygen cylinder they have. There is no consciously malevolent desire in him to kill, but neither does he have the necessary human capacity to have a broad understanding of others' situation. His volition and energy blindly trace the path of success which he calls his luck. His partial redemption comes by his child like behaviour and is marred by his lack of sympathy for the deceased. He eats and drinks and sleeps without any compunction. He is questioned by his wife and the whole crew because he does not control his exuding happiness despite Roland Burgh's death. His guilty conscience reveals itself in his self-conscious extra-sweetness despite his being tired and exhausted after conquering the Pangbat. Besides that, he never tells Kit about his previous marriage. His silence, a lack of eloquence, may be interpreted as his shrewdness and self-obsession.

Bert Holm's mother also seems to be enjoying the media attention and having a "swell time" (Buck, *Other Gods* 94) which Kit hates very much. Kit reaches the conclusion that Norman Linley's assertion that all good is to be found only in the simplest of human form is wrong. She is repelled by the revelation of the amoebic selfish existence of the farm people. "Poverty and physical labour and low birth" Kit tries to deduct, "had no magic of their own to create souls in

human beings, let democracy preach as it would" (Buck, *Other Gods* 94-5). People are good or bad, irrespective of their backgrounds.

Like Wang Lung of *The Good Earth*, Bert Holm ascends the social ladder, though rather steeply, without a proper guiding light to maintain his position. And without the Tallants especially his wife, he would have fallen into the abyss of public hatred and ignominy. The novel puts to question the simple equation between simplicity and village life, and cunningness and urban life. The novel debunks the idea of associating virtue and vices with rural working class and urban upper class respectively.

Mrs. Tallant and Kit are wealthy upper class carefree women. The dismissed nurse of Bert Holm feels bad and bitter at being given a raw deal by Mrs. Tallant. Miss Prynne has maternal affection for her patient Bert Holm and feels scandalised at the discovery of Miss Weathers' falling into a compromising situation with Bert Holm. Her humanness is not considered and she is taken to be just a nuisance creating worker. As perceived by her, the Tallant women were "wicked, light-minded women. All rich women, who didn't have to work" (Buck, *Other Gods* 223) are. Both the classes of women tend to have generalised notions about each other.

Norman Linley, the social playwright Kit loves, labels the Tallants "hateful capitalists" (Buck, *Other Gods* 36). His plays are about the stock people from farmer back ground. The farmers to him are America's real people. Kit accuses him of glorifying the bricklayers and farmers. In their repartees, she says: "you thinks that brawn which you haven't, is better than brains, which you have"

The main theme in *Voices in the House* is the threat and fear of subversion by the servants and domestic helps. Pearl S. Buck handles such topics with microcosmic examples. The drama unfolds in a family, threatening to shred the fabric of filial love and unity, with a hypersensitive, beautiful and literate daughter of old servants, desperately trying to enter the upper class she is not born into. The achievement of the novel is giving validity to both the points of view: that of the inhabitants of Winsten House including the servants on one hand, and Jessica, the rebellious daughter of the servants, on the other.

Jessica grows up in the kitchen, on the fringe of the big house, dreaming to be herself a part of it. Endowed with beauty, a form of capital, and a romantic disposition, both supposed to be class-specific; she starts living in a world of fantasy. She develops narcissism and is often found admiring herself in the mirror. Determined by her birth, she is supposed to marry from amongst the servants. Their chauffeur, Herbert, an uncouth man, in no way looks like Jessica's match. Jessica wants to break free from the chains her class puts her in and shows rebellion to her mother as well as Herbert. She keeps threatening the peace and order of the Winsten/Asher House by weaving stories about having an affair with Edwin and being seduced by Mr. Asher himself. The novel keeps the matter in abeyance as the truth is never disclosed clearly. Jessica's behaviour gradually starts looking like madness which never lets the truth come to the surface. Her allegations never come out of the shroud of mystery. The achievement of the author lies in the fact that she never tries to explain things in black and white. The shades and shadows blur the claims of both the contending

parties, the Winstens with their loyal Bertha and Herbert on one hand, and Jessica, on the other. The Winstens are helped by Bertha and Herbert in rehabilitation of their power-position. The class divide finally decides in favour of the upper class and leaves their status quo of power intact. The point of view of Jessica is invalidated and she succumbs to society which attributes integrity of character class wise. Her madness is caused by the failure of her dreams. Despite her beauty, education, dreams and behaviour, she remains doubly marginalised, based on class and sex.

The Winstens reluctantly accept Pete as he is introduced in the family by Susan who intends to marry him. The inter class marriage between Pete and Susan is easier. What Pete achieves proves impossible for Jessica as she is defeated by her sex. Thinking about Susan and Pete meeting in a blind date, William Asher muses:

It could happen . . . in such times as these all classes were churned together by war. (Buck, *Voices in the House* 148)

The final message of the novel seems to be that the classes are not determiner of human value. William and Elinor sympathise with those “contending for that upper air” (Buck, *Voices in the House* 212) like Peter and Jessica. Peter and Jessica remind William of “that most hateful word, *revolution*” (Buck, *Voices in the House* 212) and is able to see and sympathise with what the people of the world beneath them feel and think:

He saw Peter not alone but one of a vast and piteous company, pushing upwards by any means they could into the wider spaces of

a world they imagined was above them. So Jessica had tried to do, blindly and stupidly, seeing that world only in the shape of his house, God help him, from which they had all shut her out, and they had to shut her. Still, they might have understood her dreams, so childish and absurd, since for her dreams she lived and now was all but dead. Beyond her tragic shape he saw the shadowy faces of criminals he had defended and had heard condemned, all struggling and contriving and contending for that upper air." ((Buck, *Voices in the House* 212-3)

William Asher can understand "the stout Jewish doctor", Dr. Burgstein's 'hope in humanity!' to take the burden like Jessica with responsibility. Despite that Jessica cannot be owned by the family either because it is too late and besides she is a woman with no foothold in the big house. Peter can be taken care of. He does not want to think of Jessica as a burden they carried too long. She was already jettisoned. He does not like her being called a servant. Temperamentally she was a part of their house. "We didn't just let her into the house . . . She just happened to be born Bertha's child. Anyway, it's Peter we must think of, now. There is still time for Peter." ((Buck, *Voices in the House* 216)

What Pearl S. Buck detests as insensitive, angry, cruel and hateful multitude, she seems to propagate as individual cases. Jessica, Bert and Peter have space in the benevolent wealth of the world of Pearl S. Buck, real or fictive, but not the multitudes with angry faces of terror that revolutionaries represent.



Pearl S. Buck traces a total class shift in the life of the chief protagonist in *The Good Earth*, the novel on which rests Pearl's international fame. It is the story of class mobility of a man from being a simple peasant into the head of a landed family. Criticising *The Good Earth* Prof. Liu Haiping, dean of the foreign languages department at Nanjing University where Pearl S. Buck taught almost for 10 years, remarks of *The Good Earth* that "she doesn't use the class struggle analysis," in the novel. Wang Lung, the peasant protagonist in "The Good Earth," became a landlord, after all. "And she left out Western imperialism as a cause of the problems in China," (Patterson) is not a well-studied criticism of her works. In her fiction as well as her non-fiction works, Pearl S. Buck questions the existence of White Imperialist power in Asia. Another objection to Pearl's writing is her selection of people from the peasants and commoners in China, who may be the majority but they do not represent the Chinese people. Pearl finds class arrogance in this objection and finds a similar attitude "manifest in cruel acts against the working man, in contempt for the honest, illiterate farmer, in total neglect of the interests of the proletariat, so that no common people in the world have suffered more at the hands of their own civil, military and intellectual leaders than have the Chinese people" (Buck, *My Several Worlds* 323).

*The Good Earth* recounts the rise of a hard-working poor man who embodies what can be called the protestant ethics, namely speculation, money-lending, time and money both optimised to generate more money and "the idea of a duty of the individual toward the increase of his capital" (Weber, 51). The leading spirit of Capitalism as Max Weber observes "the strict avoidance of all

spontaneous enjoyment of life”, ‘acquisition as the ultimate purpose of life’, ‘economic acquisition no longer subordinated to man as the means for the satisfaction of his material needs’ (Weber, 53), all is working as the basic work ethics in the chief protagonist Wang Lung’s life. From a poor farmer at the mercy of earth, sky and an indifferent, fickle and fluctuating weather, he reaches the position of a property owner whose house is well-stuffed with surplus silver and gold. He is no more dependent on the changing hues of the weather and his daily labour to have his grub. The novel traces his gradual moral decline after he acquires economic as well as symbolic capital in the form of a big house ‘the House of Hwang’ once owned by a landed family, and honour and respect with people changing their form of address for him from Wang The Farmer to Wang The Big Man or Wang The Rich Man (Buck, *The Good Earth* 308). The ethics followed by him on the way up the social station slowly loses its importance in his life as he falls into hedonistic ways of life that are the mark of a rich man who can afford to have whatever he wishes, to keep himself gratified. Pearl recounts the story of the rise and an expected deterioration of the Chinese farmer with a nonchalant detachment. Wang Lung’s remorse shown in an MGM adaptation is missing in the original text (dir. Franklin). There is no emphasis on any kind of the moral of the story. However, the ethical values that help an individual acquire capital have been highlighted.

In the world of *The Good Earth* as in the real human world, the economic capital generates illusion and wins respect and admiration. In the beginning of the novel, Wang Lung as a poor farmer reaches the House of Hwang with shame and

diffidence to ask for a slave as his bride. The gateman who is “polite to none except the rich friends of his master and mistress” (Buck, *The Good Earth* 13) asks for bribery to let him enter in the house to have his bride. Wang Lung is so much awe-struck by the majesty of the house and its occupants that he cuts a comic and sorry figure not only in the presence of the mistress but also in front the gateman of the house. He trips and almost falls at the threshold. The gateman is contemptuous towards him and mockingly says: “Now will you be so polite as to fall on your face like this before the Old Mistress?” (Buck, *The Good Earth* 15) Wang Lung makes more than necessary obeisance to the old mistress of the house. The House of Hwang, for him, is the most respectable position, which becomes for him a motivating force at an unconscious level. When he himself can afford to live in that house, as suggested by his eldest son, he feels proud and worthy of himself and even tries to enact the handing over of a slave to a man in the manner he saw old mistress do it with him and O-lan. For him it is a journey from serfdom to elite class. He wants to enjoy the shift to the upper stratum by looking at those who belong to his old status: “I could sit on that seat where the old one sat and from whence she bade me stand like a serf, and now I could sit there and call another into my presence.” (Buck, *The Good Earth* 288). There is the enthusiasm of a *nouveau riche* in Wang Lung’s attitude towards his success.

The convertibility of economic capital into symbolic capital occurs as a natural social process in Wang Lung’s village. With his acquisition of money, the villagers start talking about making him the head. His uncle’s family provides with a contrast to Wang Lung’s family. While Wang Lung and his wife O-lan work hard

to produce more and save more, the novel describes his uncle's family as very lazy. No member in his uncle's family would budge from their place if they had enough to feed. O-lan always stitches shoes and dresses for the entire family, which saves their money, as they do not need to purchase them from the market. Their house is an attractive and clean hearth where food is stored and preserved, while the uncle's family lives in a dirty and filthy house. They curse gods for their bad luck. This poverty of this family is an outcome of a sense of poetic justice in Pearl's fictive mind. In her, there is an attempt to avoid didacticism, nevertheless, there emerges an endorsement of what Weber alleged to be the protestant ethic of hard work; money saving and denial of pleasure seeking, which prepares the psychological condition to pave the way to the rise of Capitalism. It is important to make it clear that the context about which the novel is talking is not Christian and the characters who make it big materially are not believers in Christianity. However, they practice an ethic akin to Weber's definition of Protestantism with its emphasis on individual hard work as the key to success in terms of money and respect.

The characters in *The Good Earth* are Chinese heathens. Wang Lung echoes Pearl's secular scepticism in God's benevolence and is sometimes even impudent vis-a-vis gods. However, his life establishes an evidence of Biblical assertion on the importance of good trade and commercial enterprise for an individual's success. "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings" (Weber, 53) With his labour coupled with the dogged devotion and money-saving tactics of his wife, Wang Lung is able to increase his wealth, which

he prefers to convert into property in form of land that could further help him accumulate more wealth. Despite famine that forces Wang Lung and his family to go to the South to survive, they are able to come back to their land aided by luck, his and his wife's astuteness and determination. Wang Lung seems to be inebriated with his pride in purchasing more and more land that is not only the source of subsistence for his family but also of surplus money that pours in and multiplies because of their hard work, frugality and saving.

The land that Wang Lung acquires not only gives him a sense of pride, but also a sense of comfort and solace even in the face of extreme fear and hardship. It is for him not a just a source of income and sustenance, it is like his 'flesh and blood' (Buck, *The Good Earth* 52) To Wang Lung, the land is the best form of capital and his sense of possession of and possessiveness about the land is like "soothing wine" (Buck, *The Good Earth* 75) that flows into his blood to give him comfort despite his fear that he may lose his wife and possibly all his family members at the time of famine:

They cannot take the land from me. The labor of my body and the fruit of the fields I have put into that which cannot be taken away. If I had the silver, they would have taken it. If I had bought with the silver to store it. They would have taken it all. I have the land still, and it is mine. (Buck, *The Good Earth* 75)

With a wise investment in land, Wang Lung's fortune multiplies and he is able to hire wageworkers. His neighbour Ching is also employed who proves to be a lifelong companion to the employer. However, the friendship between Wang

Lung and Ching is more intimate than an expected mechanised relationship between an employer and an employee. Nevertheless, Wang Lung never considers him to be his equal. At Ching's suggestion that he could offer his own daughter as Wang Lung daughter-in-law, if she was not sold at the time of famine, Wang Lung tries to control himself against revealing his contempt for Ching that despite Chang's being a good man, he cannot consider the daughter of "only a common farmer on another's land" (Buck, *The Good Earth* 216).

Literacy, a Cultural capital is not important to Wang Lung, until he feels that he cannot go on by rule of thumb and manage the accounts of his grain business. He gets his children educated and feels proud of them. Among the sons of Wang Lung, the eldest one is careful about the image they have among the people. He wants to establish his family name by decorating the whole house in the way old rich families do. At the instructions of his city-bred wife, he spends money on draperies, upholstery, furnishing and various ornamentations, which a rich family can only afford. He has the portraits of his ancestors made and hung in a hall in their house to be prayed and to declare that now they have a claim to honour and respect like an old established rich family. The aesthetic value leads to the acquisition of cultural capital. The second son essentially has a bourgeois mindset. He wants to save money as much as possible. For this, he wishes to marry a woman from countryside from some landed family who could ensure good dowry. There is a conflict of ideas between the elder and the younger sons. For Wang Lung, both are important, as they are complementing each other; one

by caring for the economic capital and the other for the cultural capital, thereby leading to the establishment of a family with influence in the society.

*The Good Earth* describes wretched state in which the poor famine-stricken people live in the city with pity-evoking and thought-provoking poignancy; the novel seems to be pleading the case for a change and in a way explains the reaction of the people culminating into revolution in a naturalist vein:

In the winter they had worked and been silent, enduring stolidly the snow and ice under their bare, straw-sandalled feet, going back at dark to their huts and eating without words such food as the day's labour and begging had brought, falling heavily to sleep, men, women and children, together, to gain that for their bodies which the food was too poor and too scanty to give. Thus it was in Wang Lung's hut and well he knew it must be so in every other.

(Buck, *The Good Earth* 120)

At the time of famine, the rich in the city arrange for rice gruel at a subsidised rate for the famine victims which is explained by a town dweller as an act of charity to earn god's mercy and 'merit in heaven' or for fame, but it is not attributed to good heart as Wang Lung would like to believe. He seems to believe in the writer's scepticism in the divine mercy "they (gods) notice nothing that passes". (Buck, *The Good Earth* 89) Pearl's explanation would simply have been an echo of Blake's lines:

Pity would be no more,

If we did not make somebody Poor:

And Mercy no more could be,

If all were as happy as we; . . . (Blake 53)

The rich are indifferent to the plight of the poor as they let the wretched with limited resources suffer. One of the famine-struck peasants remarks: "The hearts of these rich are hard like the hearts of the gods. They have still rice to eat and from the rice they do not eat they are still making wine, while we starve." (Buck, *The Good Earth* 90)

The bitter resentment and the simmering subversive tendency of the underdogs are often expressed in violent terms, which take a volcanic form. One of the migrants to the South at the time of famine says: "Oh if I had an instant's strength in this hand of mine I would set fire to the gates and to those houses and courts within, even though I burned in the fire. A thousand curses to the parents that bore the children of Hwang!" (Buck, *The Good Earth* 75)

The discontent of the wage earners and slum-dwellers in the city of Kouming and their "sense of unjust possession by others" of the things for which they crave and are deprived of, leads to "in the hearts of the young and the strong a tide as irresistible as the tide of the river, swollen with winter snow—the tide of the fullness of savage desire" (Buck, *The Good Earth* 126). The simmering resentment in the have-nots is a hidden seismic force in the social field that threatens to subvert the economic status quo by volcanic eruption. "When the rich are too rich there are ways, and when the poor are too poor there are ways." (Buck, *The Good Earth* 118). The novelist explains the anger of the poor as a



naturalistic outcome of an atmosphere of deprivation of some and prosperity of a few.

The result of famine and the oppression of the famished at the hands of the rich and the looming revolution have been related to each other as cause and effect. The writer at the same time highlights the failure of the cause of revolution by showing what seems to her as its ugly underbelly. The poor await an opportunity when they can plunder the rich with vengeance making a mockery of human values. In addition to it, they hardly understand the cause of revolution and the overall welfare of the society and are mostly concerned about their individual life and progress. Wang Lung comes across a young leader of the Revolution who tries to tell the meaning of Revolution by showing the picture of a person being stabbed by another on leaflets, distributed to make the cause of revolution clear to the crowd of common people around him:

“The dead man is yourselves,” proclaimed the young teacher, “and the murderous one who stabs you when you are dead and do not know it are the rich and the capitalists, who would stab you even after you are dead. You are poor and downtrodden and it is because the rich seize everything.” (Buck, *The Good Earth* 125)

To this, Wang Lung’s response is of complete ignorance and bewilderment. In his simplicity, he thinks that instead of gods, somehow, the rich are involved in the making of rain and sunlight, the only factors that to his mind are responsible in growing crops to affect his fortune. The reply given by the revolutionary is curt

enough to disenchant Wang Lung from the cause of Revolution that is already too complex for him to understand quickly:

Now how ignorant you are, you who still wear your hair in a long tail! No one can make it rain when it will not, but what has this to do with us? If the rich would share with us what they have, rain or not would matter none, because we would all have money and food. (Buck, *The Good Earth* 125)

The society envisioned by the Revolution seems to be an ideal society with no one hungry and ill-clothed. There is no gainsaying of such a dream society in Pearl S. Buck, nevertheless, the *modus operandi* and immaturity of the revolution enthusiasts and the nightmarish lawlessness that it can ensue are dreaded by the writer. This attitude of the writer is that of a fence sitter which made her unpopular with both, the capitalists as well as the communists. Sometimes fence-sitting takes more courage and rationality.

*Imperial Woman* is set in the times of the rule of Manchu dynasty. With the ingenuity of a literary artist Pearl tells the story of the ascent of a woman to power at a crucial time when Western world was making inroads and the White Colonial power was extending its control around the globe. When Yehonala, later to become Empress Dowager, senses the weakness of the ruling men of the time and realises that her energetic mind needs to exercise its energy in what is supposed to be a masculine sphere, the running of an entire country and its people. As a woman she knows her handicap; she is a second class citizen despite her birth in a Manchu family. It is very interesting to observe how the supremacy

and undisputed phallocracy of the King as a man is maintained among other common men. The Imperial family claimed to have divine sanction to rule and the King is called the Son of Heaven. Among the various traditions that uphold the King as the undisputed phallic power is the custom of banishing all the men from the palace at the fall the day:

Two hundred years the Northern dynasty had built its heart here in the Imperial city, its red walls four square inside the capital. The Emperor's city it was called, or the Forbidden City, for he was its king, its solitary male, and he alone could sleep here at night. At twilight the drums beat in every lane and cranny to warn all men to depart. The Emperor remained alone among his women and his eunuchs (Buck, *Imperial Woman* 30).

The feudal system has an ingenious mechanism to ensure and protect divine status and right for the Son of Heaven. He is believed to be the first man among all the other men. Yehonala is instrumental in exposing the weakness of the Monarch. After meeting the Son of Heaven, she feels frustrated and desires her meeting with her kinsman, a common man with no divine claim. The parallelism between Masculinity and Divinity is debunked in the novel. A male born in the highest echelon of the society with their self-acclaimed divinity, is exposed as deficient in masculinity and virility in biological as well as intellectual terms, condemned with an out of proportion desire. Nature does not distribute confidence, intellect and emotional and physical strength according to class. The banishing of all the men from the palace is a sign of insecurity about the divine

claim of monarchy. Kings reside only among women and eunuchs to keep their sense of superiority strong.

Among other customs to uphold the King's supremacy among common folks is the prohibition of the large concubinage to ever go out and see other men. The maleness of the Son of Heaven should never have any competition from ordinary folks.

Men and women have class-specific advantages and disadvantages. Foot-binding seems to be class-specific; the groups to ignore its practice were the Manchu (nevertheless Manchu ladies wore high-plat formed shoes to appear as if they had bound feet), the Hakka settlers and the poorest of peasants. The custom of foot binding started from the upper class people whose women could be given care that bound feet required, of cleaning and disinfecting and help from the slaves in taking care of the house hold chores, it became not only a fashion statement but also a status symbol due its affordability only by the wealthy. Gradually it spread to the middle classes and sometimes even the peasantry practiced it, with an eye on upward mobility in class through marriage. Beverly Jackson says that foot-binding custom originated a thousand years ago in the court of Prince Li Yu with a concubine known for toe-dancing. The royal craze moved down the social ladder, eventually reaching peasants who hoped to achieve higher status through smaller feet. ("The tradition of foot-binding is tied up in issues of beauty, marriageability and sex.") Foot binding can be considered to be a form of cultural capital that can be acquired with the help of economic capital and vice versa.

It has been discussed earlier, that Pearl S. Buck shows sympathy for the ideological tenets ensuring elimination of deprivation and an economic equilibrium among all the members of society. In her "Historical Note" with *The Living Reed* she writes that attributes the decline of Silla dynasty to neglect of the common folks: "the ruling class began to neglect the welfare of the people, and the very brilliance of their culture emphasized the misery of the less fortunate." (Buck, "Historical Note" 11) Buck mentions among the various reforms introduced by the first king Koryo, distribution of property: "land was nationalized and each farmer was given a piece of land for his lifetime; social securities were set up and universal education provided for" (Buck, "Historical Note" 12).

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## *Race*

*Hybrid rose, hybrid corn and hybrid fruits should teach us a lesson we are  
reluctant to learn*

*(Buck, "American Children Alien by Birth," 39).*



# Race

The 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries saw the emergence of the idea of race, along with the rise of colonialism and transatlantic slave trade. By the end of the seventeenth century, the racial category of "black" evolved with the consolidation of racial slavery, in the United States. The specific identities of Africans were engulfed and rendered "black" by an ideology of racial exploitation, leading to the establishment and maintenance of a "color line." The consolidation of racial slavery was an outcome of a period of indentured servitude. This led to a racially polarized society and shaped specific identities for the slaves as well as white. With homogenisation of the colonies as a whole, the new term of self-identification evolved as white (Omi and Winant).

In the conception of race, the discovery of the most perfect female human skull at the Caucasus Mountains, near the purported location of the Noah's Ark was used to establish and explain racial hierarchy starting from the Caucasoid on top. Theologically, humans are supposed to have come from Adam and Eve, but with the increase in population, some groups in later descendants degenerated and digressed into deviations, which is also used to explain racial hierarchy. On the other hand, the polygenists believe that human had different ancestors. Till the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the notion of archaic subspecies was held, with corresponding cultural and biological manifestations. But the contemporary anthropologists do not hold the idea of race as valid. Race as a scientific reality is no more accepted. The macroracial terms used in order to

categorise, e.g. light and dark are not able to cater to the diversity of humanity and therefore are being rejected (Henze and Mukhopadhyay).

However, race is another form of categorisation used to divide human race in a hierarchical pattern. Even if the horizontal hierarchy is suspended, the vertical division may not be able to cater to the diversity humanity offers. The Columbia Encyclopedia documents that many physical anthropologists believe that the concept of race is unscientific and flawed, since the genetic variations within one race are as many as there can be found between the macroracial groups, ("Race."). Hence, the term race is unsound especially when applied in order to ethnopsychologise and hierarchise the human species. As to the question how the colours and physiognomic differences marking one set of people different in appearance from others, the answer lies in "mutation , selection, and adaptational changes in human populations" ("Race.") that took place with the passage of time. Race is commonly understood to be the colour of skin or difference in physiognomy that goes into the making of one race different from others.

Despite the scientific truth, race has been used, throughout human history in varying degrees, as "a disfavored means of judging human reality and potential" (Brown). For centuries, the western society has perceived the world as Eurocentric, in terms of exploiting it for albocratic purposes. The various kinds of Eurocentric social discourses reflect and endorse the notion of superiority of white race to the coloured. For sociologists, psychologists and phrenologists there are various ways to define race and explain the reason why there exist

hierarchical parameters that declare one race to be superior to the others. Historically speaking, the success of the white race has led to the general belief that comparative lightness or darkness of skin colour is a determiner of superiority or inferiority of a particular race. Using the differentiation between essence and existence and Hegelian distinction between 'to be' and 'to have become' as used by Simone de Beauvoir, ("Introduction" 15), the concept of race and racialisation as a basis for another kind of hierarchisation can be taken as strategies to maintain the status quo of global power politics. To Howard Winant, notions of race as an "objective condition" are illogical and flawed. Race can only be understood as a "dynamic flexible social construct" (Chancer and Watkins 50). If an amount of uncertainty or accidental occurrence may be considered to be the law of the universe (Madison), little validity remains to hold the view that success as well as its resultant seeming superiority of one race is not the result of a chance in the history of evolution. It leaves space for a change in the fortunes of the history of peoples. Race conceived as a social construct suspends the hierarchical claims of some, makes the possibility of progress of each people a possible and desirable objective to make the world a better place.

However, after invalidating the existence of the term race, I would like to use the term for the sake of convenience to define colours and physiognomic features of different people. Race as a notion of hierarchy is also invalidated by the fact that "All human groups belong to the same species (*Homo sapiens*) and are mutually fertile" ("Race."). This reality of mutual fertility at the same time,

gave rise to one of the biggest social problems of human history, the mixed race children.

For Pearl S. Buck, the cause of the coloured people and the mixed race children was very important and she devoted much of her time and energy for the new breed that had bloods of different colours and physiognomic features.

Pearl S. Buck mostly has a simple and yet emphatic way to bring home her moral truth about human biases and prejudices that led the entire world asunder: that America and the entire white race should chasten themselves of their falsity of white superiority in order to prove their civilization. The black on the American soil, the other dark races around the world and the war time progeny of white and dark mingling and white in minority in Asia evoked her sympathy and made her launch a lifelong mission to bring about the much needed changes at mental, attitudinal as well as pragmatic levels. With her writings in *Asia*, Pearl S. Buck kept talking against apartheid. In the March, 1941 issue of *Asia*, she published a powerful political manifesto, "Warning to Free Nations" in which she raised her voice against the injustice imposed on the people by way of compulsory military enrolment whether they understood or agreed upon the cause they were fighting for or not. Drawing a parallel between American black-and-white segregation and European colonialism including the Indian situation, she spoke for the Chinese peasants victimised by their own government and ultimately her dark compatriots, the twelve million Negroes who were forced to fight for equality and liberty not their own, while they were putting up with Jim Crow laws, economic

and social exclusion (Conn 248-9). She called the self-acclaimed democracies as big failures in “political morality”, even if they defeat Hitler and Japan:

To fight with England for Europe’s freedom while India is governed by tyranny is a monstrous contradiction, and no more monstrous than that while the United States prepares for a mighty defence of her democracy twelve million Americans should be denied equality in a nation founded upon equal opportunity for all . . . (qtd. in Conn 249)

In response to an editorial “The Other Side of Harlem” in The New York Times, November, 12, 1941 which suggested the punishment-and-palliatives solution for the civilians, Pearl S. Buck put the blame of lawlessness on a chronic racial bias and segregation. The following words are also a challenge to social Darwinism and Jim Crow segregationism based on differential ethnopsychology and its validity as a static fact:

The reason why coloured Americans live in ghettos, where they are helpless against high rents and miserable housing, is the segregation to which race prejudice compels them. Race prejudice compels coloured people to take what work they can get because there are so many works Negroes cannot get. Race prejudice makes and keeps Negroes’ wages low because some labour unions will not admit coloured labour on the same basis as white labour. Race prejudice and race prejudice is the root of the plight of the

people in greater and lesser Harlems all over the country. (qtd. in Conn, 248.)

Pearl declared that the American institutionalised racism was even worse than Hitlerism as it was covered in the guise of false pretension of humanity whereas Hitler's was undisguised. Reprinted in *Crisis* by the executive secretary of NAACP Walter White, Pearl's voice reached Eleanor Roosevelt and the President Roosevelt. Eleanor Roosevelt, in her foreword to a reprint of Pearl's letter in *Congressional Record* accepted that older people should have the courage Pearl S. Buck, a young woman, possessed to make America a real democracy (Conn 250).

Pearl S. Buck was a clear throated voice for the cause of racial equality at national as well as international levels. In her fiction and non-fiction writings she created ripples in the national moral complacency. She tried to sensitise people towards issues that needed much attention. She tried to enable them to get rid of partial and imperfect sense of justice and declared democracy as farcical propaganda of a hypocritical nation until justice covers all the people: man, woman, black, white, rich and poor.

Race-based prejudice and victimisation are a recurrent theme in Pearl S. Buck's fiction. She knows how it feels to be on the racial margins with her experiences as a white missionary family in China. She talks about anti-white sentiments in China during the dynastic, the Nationalist and the Communist rules.

*The Angry Wife* addresses the issue of segregation based on colour and recounts the story of a family just when the North-South anti-slavery war of 1850s ends in America. The white Delaney family with an ideology-based-cleft

between the brothers represents the two points of view; one, in favour of the black slavery and the other, struggling to abolish it. Pierce Delaney and Tom Delaney who participate in the war represent the two sides respectively. Pierce Delaney is shown as triumphant, well satisfied with the remaining vestiges of the 'good old days' and determined to continue his life of luxury with an engine room taken care of by the slaves-turned-servants, despite the loss of his side and cause. Tom comes back home starved and emaciated after spending a term as a war prisoner despite the fact that his side wins the war and his anti-slavery mission seems to be accomplished. The Eurocentric approach ingeniously tries to find ways to uphold with the rationale behind the belief in the inherent superiority of the white and the justification of the black servitude to them. The war with a partially positive result in favour of the Abolitionists is not shown to be much effective in causing an attitudinal transformation with regard to the colour hierarchy and the novel concerned shows the partial nature of success of the Republicans led by Abraham Lincoln and expresses tribulation at the subsequent secession of the south.

*The Angry Wife* debunks the white physiognomic parameter of beauty that tries to exclude the coloured. The exposition of Pierce Delaney's attraction towards the black girl Georgia, his fair and beautiful wife's insecurity and jealousy suggests that the detestation for the black, their exclusion from the canons of beauty is to Pearl Buck a superimposed construct and it has no natural foundation. The civilised mannerism and appealing tone and voice of the black sisters also come as a surprise to Pierce Delaney which again debunks the myth of

their being uncivilized and uncouth by birth. Here Hegelian differentiation between 'to be' and 'to have become' works well in order to explain the behavioural patterns of different people.

In the 'mulatto' slave girls, there seems to be no conscious effort to assert the right to individual dignity. Yet behaviourally they convey clearly that they are not to be relegated into a corner as unnoticeable creatures. The elder sister proves to be an attractive diversion for Pierce Delany while the younger sister starts a family with the younger brother Tom. The house where Tom and Bettina live is modest yet well kept and maintained aesthetically. For Pierce Delany the mixed blood children of his own brother and Bettina are strange looking creatures better kept at a distance than be a cause of embarrassment for the Delaneys. At the same time he has a secret desire for Georgia. Surprisingly, the slave girls have a sense of pride and self respect. Contrary to the popular belief and expectation, Georgia is not shown to feel any pride in Delaney's admiration. Knowing that her character would be assassinated and she would be labelled as a cheap 'mulatto' girl, who hankers after a white man adding to the white presumptuousness, she herself decides to leave the house and save the Delaneys and herself a great embarrassment. She lets Lucinda have a respite from an imagined threat and establishes her psychological and emotional strength. Tom with his wife Bettina leaves the white locality followed by Georgia in the Jim Crow way. The change in the external world is shown to be at war with a stubborn social mindset that still needs much cleansing and improvement.



Ironically, the black slaves for whom the war is fought do not realise the meaning and portent of the war of their freedom. For some of them, their mental colonisation is a hindrance in accepting their new free status. The old habit of servility and servitude is as natural to them as the air enveloping them. Jake, the groom and stable keeper does not want to get wages and lose what he had been getting from the Delaneys for his subsistence:

That was the trouble, Pierce thought. You fought a war for people, you all but died, or you rotted in a prison, the way Tom had rotted nearly to death, and you come home and the people don't know what's it's all about, or why you fought and rotted. They want everything just the way it was before (Buck, *The Angry Wife* 21).

The external reality of the Abolition does not equally correspond to the inner workings in the minds of the characters. Albocracy has innocent and clever advocates among all hues of people. The long habit of thinking in terms of racial inequality is strong and refuses to cease to exist even after the Abolition, not only among the beneficiaries but also the victims.

Pierce Delaney is an exposé of the American hypocrisy and dualism which Pearl S. Buck condemns in her political diatribes of American policy at home as well as at international level. Delaney "hated slavery, while he loved his owned slaves. Some deep conservatism in his being, love of form and order, necessity to preserve and persist, made him know that union was essential for their country, still so new" (Buck, *The Angry Wife* 3).

Set in 1920s, a post slavery America, *The Time is Noon* takes up as its subject-matter different attitudes and attitudinal transformations taking place in the white Americans towards the black and the mixed blood people. The central character unarguably has remarkable resemblance to Pearl S. Buck's own self. This novel with an autobiographical note is a recount of the gradual awakening in the protagonist of her sensitivity towards racial victimisation. Joan gradually gets initiated and interested in the matter of colour based marginalisation. She dramatises the dilemma between a just, egalitarian and unbiased mind and a strong sense of social propriety. Joan feels responsible to take care of her younger brother who is in sexual liaison with a mulatto girl.

Fanny's character has resemblance with the dark slaves in *The Angry Wife* in her attractive complexion, voluptuous figure and deep voice. However, she seems to be much different from a character like Georgia who possesses integrity and a sense of pride to save herself as well as Pierce Delaney from much embarrassment and stigmatisation by the society. Fanny follows Francis like a nightmare in his white-centric mind. With an element of comedy, the novel describes her to be promiscuous having children by other lovers also. She christens them by coining a nickname for each after their fathers' names. Francis is doomed by her as he is an obsession for her while other men including her husband are just temporary flings. He is ashamed of feeling attracted to a dark girl and has a sense of doom associated with her. The metaphors of darkness and lowly earth are associated with Fanny to make Francis's sense of destruction and doom vivid to the readers' minds:

. . . she was like earth in him. She was a sediment in him, a clay. If he could run away he would be like clear water, escaping from a muddied pool. Sometimes when he was with her, though he was deep in her, he wished he could rise straight up into the sky. (Buck, *The Time is Noon* 123)

In Pearl S. Buck's fictive world, the metaphoric correspondence between light and sky with the white skinned, and darkness and earth with the dark skinned is Blakean (Blake 22-3). The analogy gathers problems with every further Manichean association with white and black skins as the former is ascribed virtues and the latter all vices in essentialist terms. Pearl S. Buck's fiction does not establish this binary opposition strictly on the basis of colour. Fanny belongs to the under privileged ghettoed people of South End with a relaxed sense of morality as a natural outcome of their environment. Fanny is a dark gravitational force that threatens Francis's White transcendence. Aided by his sister, he becomes a pilot and kills himself to make permanent his separation from the weight, darkness and earth that Fanny symbolizes. To Joan, Francis's liaison with Fanny is a shock of the magnitude of a family crisis which she needs to manage to save her younger sibling and the family. Nevertheless, she is not inebriated with colour superiority in a rigid way and succeeds to shed off her sense of discomfiture about social propriety. Her separation from her husband marks a new stage in her life. She has a new lease of courage to breathe free from the social norms. She finally ends up taking Francis's son under her shelter.

Frankie was till now under the custody of the mother, reversing the European tradition of patrilineality. In case of white and dark mating, the low-ranking parent, who are often mothers, are left with the sole burden of the progeny which is called hypodescent (Mukhopadhyay and Henze). Georgia and Bettina are also victims of hypodescent. Georgia and Bettina's father behaves as if he has nothing to do with the mixed blood children. They serve the Delaney family despite the fact that they had a white father.

With an obvious resemblance to the author, Joan becomes a mother figure who takes responsibility of not only healthy and white but also of special and dark children. Using racist vocabulary, it can be said that Frankie shifts from the status of hypodescent to hyperdescent. Dr. Steiner, Laura and Joan are characters that the author uses to explain the responsibility of sharing love with those who are neglected and even tortured for no fault of their own by having mixed blood.

Pearl S. Buck's description of Indians sounds self-contradictory. *Mandala* describes Indians as Caucasians. The tone in which they are described seems to be condescending to make a concession. The story of the novel revolves around a love affair between an Indian raja and an American girl. Indian physiognomy is extolled and exalted in *Mandala*. On the other hand, *Other Gods* describes dark Indians as some sub-humans. Kit is class-conscious and finds Indian coolies as "spider-legged black", "chattering like apes" (Buck, *Other Gods* 294). It seems to her that the streets of Bombay are filled with "dark, half-naked people" (Buck,

*Other Gods* 290). Racist vocabulary seeps into Pearl S. Buck's writings with the point of view of the class-conscious characters.

*The Time is Noon* describes the black of the South End with a comic sense. Joan admires life and energy in the black by which her father is irked. His concern to expand his evangelical enterprise to the South End people puts him in a comic situation. The contrast between his solemnity and the grandiloquent seriousness of his religious intentions, and their boundless energy and bubbling life leaves him flabbergasted:

. . . those large dark young men and the dark painted girls. He was helpless before their singing. They could take a hymn straight away from him, as they did "Oh, Beluah Land" the other day, and so with singing of it that it had ceased to be a hymn. They became stamping feet and clapping hands. There was one girl especially who snapped her fingers like a horsewhip at every intensified beat. Once she had leaped on her feet and begun to sing alone a song he had not announced or not even heard of. "Singin' with a sword in mah hand, Oh, Lawd. She sang it with her hands on hips, swaying as though she were dancing. He had pronounced the benediction hastily and come away. "The Lord is not pleased" (Buck, *The time is Noon* 148).

This version of religion is what a white mind makes it, normative, prudish, uninformative and clannish. Joan's answer to such exuberance is what the author's must be: "Let them live—let them live—let all life go on." It is a rainbow

paradigm that is suggested here. On the other hand, Joan's missionary father would like the black to be merged into the mainstream White Christian culture. His normative mind shows an attitude towards them with a heartfelt desire to uplift them by extending financial and spiritual support. Ironically, he is concerned about the black who are not baptised and always feels the pinch of the lack of fund for his evangelical mission, but he seems to spare little time to pay attention to the financial pinch his wife may be feeling, caring for the house and children.

Pearl S. Buck envisions a world with a variegated humanity adorning it in a peaceful and merry symbiosis among all the hues and colours and shades.

While *The Time is Noon* suggests a rainbow paradigm, with a view to let the black live their lives with their abundant *joie de vivre*, *Peony* suggests a eugenic solution for the Jews who are scattered and are living in various parts of the world because of anti-Semitic persecution. On one hand, her most admired and talented characters are Jews including Dr. Bergstein in *Voices in the House*, Dr. Steiner in *The Hidden Flower*, Ezra and David in *Peony*. They are admired to be the best specimen from humanity with their extraordinary minds and skills. She criticises Hitler in her fiction and non-fiction writings. On the hand, she advocates their assimilation into the culture they find themselves in as a result of Diaspora.

They must give up being being Jews as quickly as possible. It's wrong to do as they had done—maintain their own country and religion and tradition wherever they were. They have no country and they must belong wherever they happen to be. And they must lose their very blood as quickly as they can. If two generations are

not enough, then four, or eight or whatever is needed until they are lost—lost and safe. Only thus can there cease to be persecution of Jews (qtd. in Leong 38).

To Karen J. Leong, it is a suggestion for self induced ethnic cleansing. She further says that Pearl S. Buck's "self-proclaimed race blindness contributed to her anti-Semitism and American ethnocentrism—that those who want to retain their ethnic identities essentially contribute to their persecution" (38). Pearl S. Buck does seem to be advocating assimilative paradigm for the Jewish problem. She seems to be unable to find a solution for the Jewish claim for the Promised Land. She calls Palestine a barren land in *Peony*. In her realist mind she is aware that their settlement cannot be without others losing their homes. The pacifist in her hates revolution and war equally. Leong further adds: "Buck apparently expected that all the people could easily move between existing cultural locations: she had little awareness of how borders develop as a form of survival and protection" (38). Nevertheless, Pearl S. Buck did experience the persecution of the White in China. Her movement between America and China was easy, but not without life-threatening experiences. She describes Jewish colonies in China without as much threat of persecution as she herself had faced as an American. It should at the same time be remembered that she herself was a critic of American Evangelism and White economic colonisation and Imperialism.

Living on the Chinese land as a white missionary woman till her survival became a question of daily struggle in the face of the revolutionary China, Pearl S. Buck came to terms with the fact that she may be a foreigner on the American

soil, nevertheless the colour of her skin decided that she belonged there rather than to the land where her childhood memories belonged. In China she faced the country wide anti-feudal and anti-Imperialist (translating into anti-white) uprising of the Koumintang, the Chinese Nationalist party.

Jewish Diaspora resulted in the Jewish settlement in various parts of the world but it has rarely been with acceptance and without persecution. *Peony* (1948) talks of a rare example of Jewish settlement without persecution in China in the city of K'aifeng, in the province of Honan which has been as a centre receiving colonies of Jews at various times in history. This historical novel is one of the works Pearl S. Buck published under the pseudonym John Sedges. The central consciousness in the novel is a Chinese bondmaid called Peony in a Jewish household. She is a character having wisdom and far sight, qualities that the Chinese are often admired for in Pearl S. Buck's fiction. Though she is just a slave purchased by the family to serve the young lord David, she is always in the heart of the family affairs and mostly helps manage and even manipulates the family affairs according to her own wishes. She performs the function of a eugenicist, instrumental in causing the assimilation of the Jewish family into the Chinese people.

*Peony* talks about the case of Jewish Diaspora and their settlement in China. It envisions China as a melting pot for the Jews, offering them a peaceful haven to live with *joie de vivre* as the Chinese do, and renounce the gloom and darkness of their racial fate.



In a way *Peony* bases its argument on what was really going on in China. The novel shows that the Jews are welcomed and offered a Chinese surname Chao which they do not refuse to adopt. At its worst, Pearl S. Buck calls the Chinese to be at least tolerant if not welcoming or inviting and view the arrival of the Jews as “modest invasion” (Buck *Peony* 6). They flourish and prosper in the Chinese land and enjoy their lives in a peace which they mostly did not taste much in their history. The novel describes their customs and religious rituals in detail as seen from the eyes of the Chinese bondmaid. Their rituals are always in gloomy remembrance of their fate in being scattered all around the world without any land to call their own and in hope of the acquisition of their Promised Land, Palestine as declared by the Torah. Though they are not depicted with hatred akin to Nazi anti-Semitism, nevertheless, they are projected as people suffering from what may be called racial egotism endorsed by their religious scripture, the Torah. They consider themselves to be the chosen ones and sons of God and others as sons of Adam (Buck *Peony* 135). The Rabbi thinks about the whole world from the Jewish perspective and shows his ignorance by declaring that Jewish have Divine lineage and other peoples including Chinese are just human descendents of Adam in front of a simple Chinese merchant. Rabbi’s racial and religious exclusionism is reflected in his conversation with David in the presence of the Chinese merchant whose daughter David marries. For the Chinese merchant Kung Chen, the word Adam is unfamiliar which leads to a mirthful situation: “I am no son of Adam,” he retorts back, “Indeed, there is no such name among my ancestors” (Buck, *Peony* 135). The simple logic he uses to

remove the moral arch and racial egotism of the Rabbi and his people is: "...I do not like to hear any man call only himself and his people the sons of God. Let it be that you are the sons of your god if you please, but there are many gods" (Buck, *Peony* 136). Kung Chen's argument of gentilism seems to have its validity. Pearl S. Buck's earthliness, the base of all her simple ideology and beliefs is further translated into the simple declaration by the Chinese merchant who is astounded by what he feels is the Rabbi's racial megalomania: "We must pity him. So it often happens when men think too much about gods and fairies and ghosts and all such imaginary beings. Beyond this earth we cannot know" (Buck, *Peony* 136). This criticism of the otherworldliness of the Semitic religions echoes Pearl's mother's religious scepticism and her fruitless eternal wait for a sign from God as an endorsement of her decision she made to cross the Atlantic to perform the Manifest Destiny till her death. Scriptural exclusionism leads to the unpopularity of the believers of the Semitic religions: "None on earth can love those who declare they are alone the sons of God" (Buck *Peony* 136).

The women in *Peony* carrying the burden of the life force are shown to be especially racially obsessed to ensure the purity of their blood. Naomi is living on the Chinese soil as a traveller does, waiting for the Divine command to go back to the Promised Land as and when it is feasible for them and establish their rightful claim to rule there. Her plan is to marry her son off to Rabbi's daughter Leah who is well trained to carry the racial weight by maintaining the purity of their blood and keeping their racial vision alive. It can be explained as a natural result of their safeguarding their honour by never giving their daughters in return to the

Chinese who give business as well as their daughters to the Jews most willingly. The Chinese obsession with patrilineality to carry forward their family names may be a possible reason in their taking care of the sons and being flexible in giving away their daughters. However, the Chinese who are shown to be totally intolerant of exogamy as in case of *East Wind: West Wind*, are shown most tolerant and flexible in *Peony*. On one hand, it may be explained as the writer's anti-Semitic attitude that tries to prove Chinese goodness and simplicity against the Jewish ingenuity and craft or the fact that the Chinese have hatred for only the European race which excludes the Jews, for they sense the Whiteman's bigger, acquisitive agenda of colonisation. The British aimed at Asia and other soft targets while the Jews used China as a temporary resting place and eye elsewhere as their destination as per their divine command.

Whatever the Jews may be yearning for - a return to the Promised Land and live as Divine creatures- *Peony* does not foresee any chance of their return to Palestine and rather suggests their settlement wherever they find their peaceful symbiosis with the local people. Ezra and David want to spend their lives in China enjoying a simple and carefree life in the Chinese spirit. The synagogue is described to be in a state of ruin symbolizing the decline of the Jewish people. The weekly congregation that once made much wailing and weeping sound gradually becomes weaker and weaker day by day. The Rabbi's house is shown to be overtaken by moss, symbolically implying that nature is trying to defeat the cause of an exclusionist people. Peony cleverly manipulates the situation in Ezra and Naomi's household and lays the plan of David's

marriage with a Chinese girl if she cannot herself have him. Naomi's efforts to bring Leah and David close to each other so that the blood of the next generation remains pure according to the divine command do not materialize. This is Pearl S. Buck's idea of harmony among peoples at any cost including the loss of cultural, religious and ethnic identities and here is her love and fondness for racial hybridisation. Proposing such a solution, Peony ends on a typical Pearl Buck' euphoria:

Their blood is lively in whatever frame it flows, and when the frame is gone its very dust enriches the still kindly soil. Their spirit is born anew in every generation. They are no more and yet they live forever (Buck *Peony* 280).

Miscegenation or exogamy exalted in *Peony*, is difficult to accept in Joan's mind in *The Time is Noon*. For Pearl S. Buck's another female protagonist, it is like an ethereal dream in *Letter from Peking* (1957). Nevertheless, it is asserted that it should be qualified by love. The novel is in the first person narrative, revealing the profound feelings of a female narrator in love. There is an element of exoticisation of Oriental physiognomy and a romance that blooms between an American girl and a half Chinese. Love is idealised, worshipped and even sentimentalised only to be ruptured by "history, past and present" (Buck, *Letter from Peking* 193). The novel sets an undercurrent fear and a sense of foreboding of the future separations from the very beginning by mentioning the racial difference as a hurdle.

For Elizabeth, an American woman, it is a matter of uncertainty whether her half Chinese lover would win her mother's approval. There are sheer Pearlean revelry and celebration in the description of the half Chinese and half American, rather a multi racial man:

I wondered for one moment whether I would tell her next that Gerald was half Chinese. He can pass for a dark Caucasian, for his eyes are slightly almond-shaped, they are large and his brows are handsome. He is far more beautiful as a man than I am as a woman...For indeed there is some magic in the mingling of blood. Yet from which side the magic comes, who knows? It is the formula that provides the freshness . . . (Buck, *Letter from Peking* 20-1).

Elizabeth can appreciate the beauty emerging out of the mingling of blood. With a robust conviction, she helps her son not only to come to terms with but also to be proud of his ancestry and "a noble inheritance" which is "on both sides of the world" (Buck, *Letter from Peking* 96). She wants him to use his lineage as a positive identity without denigrating others. Allegra finds Rennie queer after the knowledge about his ancestry and Elizabeth is a big critic of shallow girls like Allegra who have only a "cupful" of love to offer. By her intervention and revelation of Rennie's lineage, Elizabeth puts Allegra to test which she fails, thereby saving Rennie from a future heartbreak.

From an American woman's perspective, the Chinese beauty lies in the smoothness of complexion "which only Chinese ancestors can bequeath...the colour of Guernsey cream" (Buck, *Letter from Peking* 14), a grace in overall

demeanour and an enigmatic reticence. Elizabeth can observe and appreciate it all due to her open mindedness that comes from her father. It finally results in her falling in love with a man with a Scotch for grandmother and an American for father and a Chinese for mother. Elizabeth prides in her unbiased attitude: "The windows of my father's mind were open to the world. When he died, I kept the windows open" (Buck, *Letter from Peking* 22). On the other hand, Mrs. Kirke, Elizabeth's mother is described by the narrator as "a limiting influence" having no large emotions and no world feelings" (Buck, *Letter from Peking* 97). Mental and attitudinal openness is not sex-specific qualities to Pearl S. Buck. The kinship between the author and the narrator is to be found in an unbiased appreciation of all the human varieties, a romantic glorification of the various hues of love of and scepticism about the otherworldliness of religion. That religion is not able to stop the world from going asunder perplexes the author as well as the fictive Elizabeth. Elizabeth does not feel indebted to the Church for her broad mindedness or "world feeling": "The Church which we went taught me nothing of the much talked-of and seldom practised brotherhood" (Buck, *Letter from Peking* 97).

*Letter from Peking* is about lovers who are the victims of time and history. Forced by the xenophobic China under a Communist regime, the "more" American members of the family need to come back to Vermont valley which is Elizabeth's forefather's land and where she had spent her childhood. Gerald MacLeod stays back in China, his motherland, as a University president. In spite of their immense love which is idealised throughout the novel by the narrator, the

couple cannot reunite. And Gerald is killed perhaps making an attempt to flee China to meet his American wife and child. Despite all his attempts to be Chinese, Gerald cannot forget his family and his own American half.

The unfortunate separation of the lovers in *Letter from Peking* is due to the unacceptability of people of mixed blood on both parts of the world. In America, Gerald is a Chinese while in China he is an American. The world prefers finding the difference more than the similarity while humanity takes a backseat. Gerald's father, MacLeod, a pure white, has to be discouraged from wearing a Chinese robe when he has to take a train journey as "Americans are not used to people who look different" (Buck, *Letter from Peking* 60).

The world shrinks small with racial prejudice and a person whose lineage traces to two different races feels claustrophobic for he is trapped by his twin ancestry. He can die but not isolate the fusion which exists in his body. The narrator can see that Gerald has split psychological leanings not because of the fact that he belongs to two trans-Pacific lands but on account of the fact that he is the fruit of a loveless marriage. Rejected by his American beloved, MacLeod marries Ai-lan at the behest of his Chinese friend for whom staying bachelor for a man is not normal. Their loveless marriage leaves the woman heartbroken and she tries to find solace in the communist struggle for power during the 1920s.

"There is nothing so explosive in this world as love rejected" (Buck, *Letter from Peking* 190). Pearl S. Buck hates loveless and irresponsible copulations. Elizabeth criticises American men whom she declares to be irresponsible, incorrigibly adolescent and stubborn enough to refuse to grow. On one hand,

they try to pretend to be shy and decent to desire all the conversations to be bowdlerised in the presence of their wives, mothers and middle-aged women:

For all their adolescent interest in physical sex, they are singularly pure and unsophisticated. They scatter their seed around the earth these days, begetting children in Europe and Asia as innocently and irresponsibly as young tomcats in spring. They pause to mate and wander on (Buck, *Letter from Peking* 119).

On the other hand, they refuse to accept the reality they themselves create.

The political history and human meanness either strangle love or separate lovers. *Letter from Peking*, *The time is Noon*, *The Hidden Flower* and *The New Year* are such novels that prove that love, though so much idealised, has no power in the face of stark reality of human meanness. Nevertheless the writer is able to make a plea for the fruits of such love. The Rennies, Frankies, Lennies and Kim Christophers of the world need support and love as much as any white male child of any prosperous family does.

Pearl S. Buck's novels project reality of racialism by describing what the markers of race among people are. People smell and are what they eat. After living in China, Pearl S. Buck found Americans smell "a rank wild odour" and sometimes could not finish watching a movie due to it. They smell due to their food that consists of dairy products and meat. Smell is often taken as a marker of race. Nevertheless, her explanation is: "There is no validity whatever to the absurd theory that races smell differently from some inherent cause. Unwashed people of all races smell unwashed, and beyond that their odour depends upon



their food" (Buck, *My Several Worlds* 315). In *The Promise* the Americans are supposed to be smelly and the Chinese allies think that they can recognize the American military by their smell that is due to their food habit which consisted of dairy products (Buck, *The Promise* 49).

The hatred of the white is also due to the fact that they rob the trade and commerce from the natives. The Burmese call the English men *Ying*. They hate the English as well as the Chinese as they think that they rob them of trade opportunity. When economy is captured and the natives feel cheated, it inevitably leads to racial prejudice. They refer to the Japanese as 'dwarf devils' (Buck, *The Promise* 140). Economic onslaught by the Chinese is a microcosmic example of what the white Imperialist do at an international scale, exemplified by the opium war in China (Buck, *The Promise* 101).

The colour and physiognomic differences leading to repulsion and detestation is often a result of what may be called "living in a small well syndrome". Interestingly, colour and physiognomic xenophobia is found equally in the white as well as coloured people. The chief of the Chinese division sent to fight the Japanese shows a strange reaction when he sees a white man for the first time: "What faces were these – bearded, haggard, bony, the nose huge, the eyes sunken. White? They were dark with filth and burned by the sun to the colour of his mother's red clay teapot!" (Buck, *The Promise* 153).

It is not exactly racial bias that Sheng feels for the white man; it is more of a reaction to something new and bizarre from the lens of a far-Easterner's eyes. The writer reverses the western assumption that it is the centre and the norm;

seen from the perspective of another people the white look like deviation. The writer explains what kind of reaction the white must be evoking in the Chinese that must have made the case against the white simple and led to their hatred for them especially during the rule of Tzu Hsi (1861-1908) who encouraged the Boxers to eliminate the foreigners. The comic element in recounting the reaction of a Chinese who gets the shock of seeing a Whiteman lampoons the racist feelings in the white for different peoples. Wang Lung in *The Good Earth* is frightened to come across a Whiteman who happens to be in all probability a Russian:

. . . a man, very tall, and lean as a tree that has been blown by bitter winds. This man had eyes as blue as ice and a hairy face, and when he gave the paper to Wang Lung it was seen that his hands were also hairy and red-skinned. He had moreover a great nose projecting beyond his cheeks like a prow beyond the sides of a ship and Wang Lung although frightened to take anything from his hands, was more frightened to refuse, seeing the man's strange eyes and fearful nose. (Buck, *The Good Earth* 123).

On the other hand, it is difficult even for the white men to accept that small brown men of Burma are human beings like them. This awareness makes brown men feel sullen. The racial feeling can be seen at the time of war between the Asian and American allies also. The American army though in a dire need of Chinese help cannot rise above racial feelings. The American soldiers try to practice Jim Crow in Burma. The tired soldiers at reaching their allies in Burma get

to know that they are seen as some subspecies and racial untouchables. They are told to stay away from the American embankment (Buck, *The Promise* 155). Racial bias in one racial group generates racial bias in others. It is mutual between the Asians and the Americans. For them it is difficult to find any sexual attraction in the different physiognomy of the other race. For example the hairiness of the Americans looks animal-like to the Chinese and their high noses make them resemble sniffer dogs and their skins peeled fruit. To Americans, Chinese girls are too small and pale. For Mayli who has been educated in America and has become racially and culturally bifocal, it is simpler to notice their charm. She has overcome her same race fixation and can easily find beauty and attraction in the physiognomy of other peoples too.

The falsity of White moral superiority is scoffed at and debunked in Pearl's fiction. Pearl describes the brazen treachery of the white allies with the Chinese at the time of war against the Japanese in *The Promise*. The Chinese division summoned to rescue puts up a fierce and undaunted resistance receives a great shock of White men's treachery when they discover that the bridge by which they could get back to safety is broken by the white allies after use. For the white allies the lives of their Asian allies are not so valuable once they are put to good use of saving their lives (Buck, *The Promise* 195). The white ethnocentricity results in an arrogant, authoritative and callous behaviour in the British and American army. It presumes that in case one of the two needs to be saved, it would unarguably be the White.

The white men insult the Chinese by avoiding to call them by their names and identify them as individuals. They call them Chinks as naturally as they draw breath even without realizing that they do it. They do not shake hands, not so much for the difference in their cultures as for the difference of their skin colour. The news gatherer of the Chinese division is a new confident man who points out behavioural mistakes of his companion American soldier and declares to him with confidence that he does not accept that the white skin is a mark of superiority: "I am not really a real 'Chink' –as you call me. A real one would have been polite to you even whether you were polite or not. But I am a new kind of 'Chink'—I am not polite to a man just because he is a white man" (Buck, *The Promise* 197).

The Asians accept the superiority of the White and by doing so they abet the superiority complex of the albocratic mind. A Chinese deserves to be called derogatory Chink, if he believes in undisputed superiority of the White and is always respectful and servile to them even if they are snubbed and insulted. But this assumed notion of white superiority is to be observed only in the times after the white established their superiority by making inroads into the economy of China and in warfare also. The older generation is sure of the Chinese superiority in terms of culture and civilization. Kwei-lien, the narrator-protagonist of *East Wind: West Wind* is astounded to know the point of view of the white as her husband tries to explain it to her. With the writer's 'bifocality' the Western educated doctor husband tries to explain the narrow racial bias and normative behaviour of the white in a simple way, "it does not occur to them that people can look as we do, and be wholly as human as they are" (Buck, *East Wind: West*

*Wind* 88). The one sided idea of the 'white man's burden' is criticised by the doctor though he feels indebted to the West for his education in medical science: "In fact, I believe they come over here thinking to teach us civilization. They have a great deal to learn from us, it is true, but they don't know it anymore than you realize what we have to learn from them" (Buck, *East Wind: West Wind* 89).

Kwei-lan's mother considers the foreigners to be like barbarians and takes help of the religion in order to justify the distance and separation between America and China. Any attempt at communication namely the telegraph seems to her as defiance against divine commands. "Did not the gods in their wisdom pour out the sea between us in order to separate us from them? It is impious to unite what the gods in their wisdom have put apart" (Buck, *East Wind: West Wind* 140-1). She considers the geographical separation as a divine command for them to stay away from each other. The traditional Chinese resist the process of globalisation that starts with the advancement in information technology.

Kwei-lan, the narrator in *East Wind: West Wind* expresses her sense of wonder at whatever she observes about the foreigners and especially what she hears about them in forms of stories mixed with superstitions and xenophobia. She is told by the servants that the foreigners know the art of extracting the soul out of a man with a black box. When she herself comes face to face with them, she is horror-struck and finds it hard to believe that people with different physiognomy can be even human beings. The writer swiftly switches to Kwei-lan's lens to describe American, "...to my horror," says Kwei-lan, "his head, instead of being covered with human hair, black and straight like that of the other people,

had on it fuzzy red wool! His eyes were like pebbles washed by the sea, and his nose up a very mountain in the middle of his face. Oh, he was a frightful creature to behold—more hideous than the God of the North in the temple entrance!” (Buck, *East Wind: West Wind* 104). Kwei-lan is convinced now that they were justifiably called “foreign devil”. One of the concubines keeps staring at the American woman and retorts back to Kwei-lan when she tries to censure her: “Anyone so ridiculous and inhuman in appearance must expect to be looked at—and laughed at as well!” (Buck, *East Wind: West Wind* 231). The race-specific criterion of beauty makes the foreigner look ugly to Kwei-lan. She takes the blonde colour of hair of the woman as “unfortunate” (Buck, *East Wind: West Wind* 104). Especially, she finds the foreign woman’s unbound feet very ugly as they look big like “rice-flails” (Buck, *East Wind: West Wind* 104). In her ‘racial anxiety’, (Burman) she tries to hold up the culture-defined sex-position and expects woman to be inferior to man naturally and is unreceptive to the modern Western ideas that may put woman at a relatively more advantageous position. It leads her to explain their white skin as a result of too much of washing when she is shown a room where every day all the members of the American family are washed. The uneducated Chinese female character may easily be read as Pearl S. Buck’s contribution to Orientalism, since she betrays the ignorance of the traditional Chinese women. The scientifically sanitised way of living of the foreigners comes to her as a shock and it is difficult for her to change to their ways when demanded by her husband. The writer describes her response and

reaction to her modern husband's thoughts and the foreigners in the most humorous and yet sympathetic way.

White as well as Asian Imperialist powers are projected as predators in Pearl's fiction. *The Hidden Flower* is set against the time of American occupation of Japan after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The novel relates the story of passionate love between a Japanese girl and an American boy who is colonel in the American army occupying surrendered Japan. The surrendered Japan looks feminised. The analogy is established further by the hauteur of manner in which Allen Kennedy behaves with Josui's father. Though, he feels ashamed of himself in retrospection, he takes it as a matter of his right to have the girl he likes. Post-war power position in favour of America decides and determines the way Dr. Sakai and Allen Kennedy treat each other. Despite Dr. Sakai's determination to be most Japanese in his behaviour and treasure all the Japanese traditions after America rejects him, he has to surrender to his daughter's demand to be allowed to go with the American soldier. The way the American soldier eyes upon Josui, pursues, courts and marries her is Buck's contribution to Orientalism as it reflects "heteronormative gaze structures masculine/feminine, white/non-white relations...as metaphors for national and racial hierarchies of power and inequity" (Leong 5). The same gaze structure is reversed in case of Josui and Kobori. Josui talks to him in a bold way, having lived in America till she turned fifteen. Kobori has lived in Japan throughout his life and represents Japanese politeness and courtesy. Josui's association with a bold and masculine America and Kobori's association with an ancient traditional

civilization, now emasculated after WW II, determine their behavioural patterns with each other.

In *The Dragon Seed*, China is feminised vis-a-vis the Japanese invaders. The novel is replete with examples of sexual assault in the goriest possible manner, which establishes the masculine and feminine behavioural patterns between the two countries. In, 13, December, 1937, the Japanese army invaded the entire Nanking killing around a hundred and fifty thousand of civilians and raping women mounting up to twenty thousand. The novel recounts the rape of a fat old lady who is unable to run away, the sodomisation of a young boy by Japanese Army and a gang rape of a young foolish woman whose last rapist desecrates her dead body. Pearl sketches a very violent and testosterone driven picture of the Imperialist Japan.

Josui in *The Hidden Flower* is valued by her father as a repository of his cultural and social capital and therefore is held very precious to be protected from the American soldiers' straying gaze after the Japanese government's surrender in 1945. Though, Pearl never idealised America as a panacea for all the social malaises and biases; be they gendered, racial or class based. But Josui's mind always goes back to the time she spent in America till she turned fifteen. Japan does not allow her to run while in America she could run fast back home after the school. In America, a woman is not supposed to serve a man as much as she has to do in Japan. To Allen Kennedy and his father, her habit of paying attention to his smallest needs looks like overindulgence as compared to American ways. Josui's Japanese fiancé whom she leaves to follow Allen Kennedy



loves her intensely and wants to marry her after the failure of her marriage with Allen Kennedy. Nevertheless his intense love does not teach him how to serve his beloved. Despite the waiter's suggestion, Kobori is unable to serve her food and Josui agrees in her heart that she can serve this Japanese lover of hers throughout her life. Josui thereby shifts from a doubly jeopardized position based on her gender and race to a single gender based jeopardy.

The novel seems to have established American hawkish masculinity in more than one way. The Sakai family lives in America until Dr. Sakai is given a choice between concentration camp in Arizona or repatriation to Japan. Being a proud man Dr. Sakai chooses the latter. His resentment against America is not caused by WW II as much as his being rejected by her and the American woman he wants to marry. He is betrayed by her and threatened by her brother. Dr. Sakai is jilted by the woman he loves and also by the country where he had spent most of his life.

The political situation, in the ant-bellum Occupation times, brings the worst out of people and individuals. They begin to accentuate their racial and cultural identity ties. Dr. Sakai trains himself to sit for long hours with folded legs, tries to observe tea ceremony with an eye to minute details and practice self-control to inculcate the essence of Japanese culture which he was not well exposed to until his repatriation. Josui tries to break away from the path followed by her father as she goes to America following her American husband after a Buddhist marriage ceremony.

Despite her attempt to live with her American husband, the Japanese girl is not absorbed in the American family of her lover whose passion slowly gets diluted by the hurdles of the law of the land that forbids inter-racial marriage especially between an American and a girl from an aspiring Asian Imperial power. She is penalized for her refusal to be a repository of the symbolic capital of her Japanese family that realises race and culture specific values after repatriation to Japan.

The Hidden Flower presents a case of same sex sympathy or sisterhood, fracturing the consideration of race. Cynthia declines Allen Kennedy's offer of marriage. She senses that Josui's decision to leave Allen is based on her discovery of her pregnancy. Cynthia finds no attraction in an insensitive Allen. She has objection to Allen's apathetic treatment of Josui. Cynthia's resentment against a Japanese girl who seems to have taken an eligible American bachelor awaited by a girl of his own race back home, turns into sympathy for her sex-class. She measures Allen's capacity to love and finds it insufficient. She points it out to Allen that he is not strong enough for a woman to move out of Virginia and establish his family with Josui.

Pearl S. Buck complicates Josui's case by race, gender and class issues: as a woman she is the one, who is uprooted and needs to be transplanted, but the foreign soil refuses to accept her; as a woman she needs to be transacted with the various forms of capital without which she holds no value and is discarded by her lover who does not want to lose his chance to add to his capital by marrying a woman of his own race and class.

In America, Josui is not allowed to enter Allen Kennedy's home. In Virginia, the law forbids interracial marriages. There is unwillingness in Allen Kennedy to leave his rich legacy. His state repels her and she leaves her lover with his baby in her belly. Josui is a victim of an ethnocentric society.

Pearl S. Buck discusses food habits as race-markers as discussed earlier regarding smell as a marker of race. Asians especially Asian women are considered weak in her novels. It is attributed to their food habits, consisting of only fish, vegetables and rice without dairy products. In *The Hidden Flower*, Josui's mother has crooked legs and a bad set of teeth that make her feel ashamed of herself. It may be read as an evidence of Pearl S. Buck's contribution to Orientalism. Mrs. Sakai is always self-conscious about her bent legs and never forgets the fact that Dr. Sakai, after having lived in America, hates her bent legs. Dr. Sakai is busy writing a book entitled *Diseases of Deficiency*. In Pearl S. Buck's fiction, a good appetite and a healthy food habits are associated with the success of individuals and peoples.

Pearl S. Buck's alleged contribution to Orientalism seems to be balanced by the fact that she can see through the so-called self acclaimed free and democratic nature and civilised and scientific ways of the western societies. She minces no words in pointing out to the flaws in the American ways also. Mrs. Sakai, after her years in America, has not learnt the dirty American ways of keeping a cloth handkerchief in the pocket after use and always uses paper napkins like Japanese do. In *East Wind: West Wind*, Buck while on one hand makes fun of the Chinese's habit of spitting on the floor, she finds fault with the

western way of putting a used cloth handkerchief back into the pocket. Kwei-lan detests her husband's habit of keeping a cloth handkerchief into his pocket to be used and reused by calling it "A filthy western habit!" (Buck, *East Wind: West Wind* 48).

The crisis that is the pivot of the story in *East Wind: West Wind* is the confrontation between the Western and the Eastern world-views. The Western educated husband represents candid and unbiased open mindedness and the traditionally trained and brought up woman innocent and ignorant parochialism. The wife's character is redeemable by her ignorant innocence and a flexible and eager adaptability to new ways and ideas due to her immense love for her husband. Their parents belong to the old China which is gradually dying a slow death in the face of change implemented by the new generation. Kwei-lan's brother goes to America for further education in modern science. Despite her mother's opposition and insistence that at least he procreates a progeny before leaving, to provide the parents solace in case he himself dies. Unyielding to any of his parents demands, he leaves for further education and falls in love with an American girl. The marriage is totally unacceptable to the parents, especially to the mother who wants a son of pure Chinese blood as a fruit of her son's first consummation. Kwei-lan herself is outraged at the thought that her brother is about to put a child of impure blood at her mother's knees. For her, it is difficult to imagine that an American woman can look attractive to her brother. She finds her husband's American female friend that she visits, without any womanly charm and attractions, with unfortunate yellow hair and large feet. The Chinese

criteria of beauty for her are the norms which would exclude all others belonging to other races. Black hair, short stature and small bound feet with subtle and quiet movements to attract the male are what traditional Chinese women are supposed to possess. Kwei-lan finds the foreign woman her brother marries and brings to China “like the blossom of the wild orange tree, pure and pungent, but without fragrance” (Buck, *East Wind; West Wind* 181-2). The subtleties and coquetry lacking in the American woman and her independence are taken by the traditionally brought up Chinese woman as unwomanly characteristics. The idea of cultural/racial autonomy dilutes the cause of sexually disadvantaged across different races.

The traditional Chinese are an ethnocentric people. Many of Pearl S. Buck's Chinese novels have exposition of their presumptions and racial fallacy based on a lack of knowledge. The uneducated simple Chinese are shown to hold that China is the centre of the Earth and they are the most ancient and the most civilised people on this planet. “As for our country, it must be in the middle. Else why did the wise ancients, who knew everything, call it the Middle Kingdom?” (Buck, *East Wind: West Wind* 92) says the old cook woman trying to refute Kwei-lan. The words which Kwei-lan's brother chooses to present his wife with, to his mother are full of racial egotism obviously with an aim to appease his mother. Her being white seems to be some kind of debility and her sex puts her in a doubly disadvantageous position:

She comes as the daughter in law of my mother. Although in her veins is foreign blood, she wishes me to tell our honourable

mother that since she is married to me, her heart has become Chinese. She takes upon herself voluntarily the race and customs of our family. She renounces her own. Her sons will be altogether of our celestial nation, citizens of the Bright Republic, and heirs of the Middle Empire. She gives her homage (Buck, *East Wind: West Wind* 190).

The American girl is to renounce her customs and race and adopt the Chinese as her own. She is doubly marginalised in this case based on her sex and race.

Pearl S. Buck's utopian idea of a world free of racial prejudice is expressed through some character in her novels. Laura in *The New Year* and Dr. Steiner in *The Hidden Flower*, Kwei-lan's husband, brother and sister-in-law represent a hope for Pearl's utopia. Pearl's ideal human beings, discarding the asphyxiating racial prejudices, think of founding a new world. After waiting for long for the acceptance of his wife by his parents, Kwei-lan's brother decides to stop enduring more and decides to leave his parents' house: "In your country you told me you would take my race and nationality upon you and share it. Well, if it is impossible at the end of this year, we will leave it all behind us, I and will become American with you. And if that is impossible, then we will found a new country and a new race somewhere—so that we can be together. You must not doubt me indeed, O my love!" (Buck, *East wind: West Wind* 231).

As mentioned earlier, the mutual fertility of all the peoples flouts the idea of race. But the same reality, when not accepted, gives rise to a problem especially as it did at the time of World Wars that put the entire race to shame:

the question of unwanted mixed race children. Pearl S. Buck's efforts to find homes for the unwanted mixed race children that were fruits of war can hardly be overstated. Welcome House and Pearl S. Buck Foundation are two most concrete examples of how much she felt and did for the cause of what she called Amerasian or "world children" (Buck, *The Hidden Flower* 196). Pearl S. Buck's novels make an attempt to bring home the simple logic and morality that the mixed race children are not responsible for their existence. They need as much love and care as people with so-called 'pure' blood. She questions the imagined impurity of blood as a figment of parochial imagination. She problematises the question of purity and the notion of superiority associated with it. That racial consanguinity is a wishful and unachievable dream of the racial egotists is evidenced by her fiction dealing with mixed race children. Citizens of the world at least at an individual level should show willingness to accept the reality of the children of war and the responsibility they have towards them. She believes that mixed race children are better and superior genetically as hybrid roses are; they are more gifted and talented as they inherit wisdom of diverse people. With a very progressive outlook and approach she advocates the adoption of such children by the families who can love and care for them. She herself adopted such children and cared to give them a quality life.

*The Hidden Flower* takes up the issue of such unwanted mixed race children whom Pearl S. Buck admired and loved as most exotic and gifted creatures on the planet. Dr. Steiner undergoes the same strange trauma that the author must have gone through for the child of an American soldier and a

Japanese woman, when she tries to find an adoption home for it. She finally decides to adopt the baby herself in the way Pearl S. Buck herself did because of her desire to have a massive family full of children and her inability to have it in a biological way. She more than compensated her hearty desire as she adopted mixed race children which she herself could not bring forth even if she had no health problem. Dr. Steiner is a rational and sympathetic spinster who tries hard to find a home for the unborn child of Josui Sakai and Allen Kennedy. Miss. Bray, despite having three hundred and seventeen pairs of ready-to-adopt parents disappoints Dr. Steiner by telling her that none would like to adopt Lennie because of his mixed blood. Voicing Pearl S. Buck's thoughts, Dr. Steiner exclaims with vexation about the sham that she thinks that American democracy is: "Hah! Such democracy makes me think about damned Hitler! I myself am one-eighth Jewish, but for Hitler I was a whole Jew" (Buck, *The Hidden Flower* 211). The ugly Dr. Steiner is one of Buck's affectionately portrayed characters who never hopes to have a child of her own. She is moved to feel maternal attraction toward the lovely child and finally decides to keep him with her. His mixed blood which puts him at a disadvantage with others endears him to Dr. Steiner more: "A very remarkable child,' she exclaims, "There is something here. It is more than the individual...There is racial bounty here, which one often sees when races mingle. This is what Hitler never understood. When old stocks cross, something new is born" (Buck, *The Hidden Flower* 215).

Dr. Steiner is one of Pearl S. Buck's ideal characters who have disdain of racial hatred and cannot see any reason whatsoever that can justify exclusion and



hatred based on race and ethnicity. She is a doctor who is respected and obeyed for her expertise and efficiency as a doctor. Pearl always has admiration for the Jews as one of the most talented people in the world. About Jews, she says, "It is a creative strain" (Buck, *My Several Worlds* 1955 343). Dr. Steiner has in her memory the cruel anti-Semitic genocide and she remembers that any German including children, carrying a Jewish lineage was tortured and killed in the concentration camps in Nazi Germany: "They said we must have only pure blood—as though human blood is not pure wherever it is found!" (Buck, *The Hidden Flower* 205). Dr. Steiner, a Jew is shown to have an extra-ordinary understanding of universal humanity. She is a woman who had starved and lost all her teeth -"some of them had been knocked out, some had fallen out"-, in the concentration camp. She is no stereotype of a Shylockean Jew. She is a messiah for Lennie to fill his early memory with love. She revels in the fact that she is able to save at least one child from amongst those who are made to suffer for what their parents are: "Jews, Catholics, rebels, the hated, the feared, the despised" (Buck, *The Hidden Flower* 237). She believes that knowledge beyond the ordinary is required to appreciate a racial bounty that Lennies of the world are: "Ignorance could not discern him, the ignorance of the narrow in mind, the small in heart, but she, she could know" (Buck, *The Hidden Flower* 238). Dr. Steiner knows that her triumph lies in her true knowledge which is beyond prejudice. Dr. Steiner, a loveable character, cast somewhat in the image of the author, cannot come alive in the fictive world of Pearl S. Buck, had Pearl S. Buck been an ardent anti-Semite.

Mrs. Markey, the nurse Dr. Steiner employs to look after Lennie also dotes on him. She is often chastised by her neighbours for her love for Lennie who is a half Japanese while her son was killed by some Japanese. Though she is an unlearned woman, yet she possesses the necessary sense that Pearl S. Buck admires and dreams of inculcating in the entire human race. She simply responds to the neighbours' insensitive remark: "It wasn't Lennie that did it, for sure" (Buck, *The Hidden Flower* 216). Lennie belongs to a new race, a race "free from these ancient and wicked bondages" (265), which Kwei-lan's brother speaks of founding in *East Wind: West Wind*.

Laura in *The New Year*, like a true better half of her husband, rehabilitates his son by a Korean woman. She is saddened by the plight of half American children, most unfortunate to be born and treated even worse than the mongrels, found begging and rag picking on the roads. She is horror struck at the knowledge of mixed race children being castrated and killed in Korea. Laura, Dr. Steiner, Mrs. Markey and Joan, all belong to avant-garde rescuers of hope for humanity.

Kwei-lan in *East Wind: West Wind* finds it hard to believe that her brother is in love with an American and would even be progenitor of a half Chinese and half American children. Her mother wishes that she should have a male and purely Chinese child from the first consummation of her son. A son is not an individual but a representative of his race and just a carrier of the seeds for the traditional Chinese people. For the playful father of Kwei-lan, the American woman is a plaything to be toyed and forgotten as he does with so many of his concubines. He scoffs at the possibility of his son having a child with the woman

and is already against the unborn child. In his pseudo-scientific way, he declares: "Where blood is mixed and not pure the heart cannot be stable" (Buck, *East Wind: West Wind* 262).

Laura in *The New Year*, decides to take responsibility of one such child sired by her husband by a Korean girl when he stays there because of compulsory military enrolment. When she is in Korea she is told with utter shock and horror, that children begotten by the Americans are being killed or castrated. Mr. Pak a wealthy Korean businessman hates the half American children and believes in the superiority of Korean blood:

He was filled with secret fury...because the stupid young Americans in the armed forces had spawned so many half-breed children. Korean girls were in it for business reasons, but the men were spendthrift and fools. He advocated in safe places that such children be strangled at birth, or if they lived that at least the boys be castrated. The blood of Koreans was ancient and pure, and it was intolerable that it will not remain so. Through the centuries they had not mingled even with Chinese or Japanese. Why then should this present miscegenation take place (Buck, *The New Year* 176).

Pearl S. Buck feels that such children are born too soon when the world is not ready to receive them. Surprisingly, those in power seem to be totally apathetic to the issue of mixed race children though they themselves are responsible for a situation that produced such children. Laura is always

preoccupied with the thought of settling Kim Christopher's complex situation and Christopher Winters' delay in decision making on account of his campaign for governorship. She tries to find solace in reading books that so well echo Pearl's thoughts namely *Man's Most Dangerous Myth, The Fallacy of Race* by Ashley Montague:

When we combine oxygen and hydrogen, we obtain water...When we combine zinc and copper, we obtain an alloy, bronze, which has far greater strength, and numerous other qualities, than the unalloyed metals comprising it; that is certainly getting more out of a mixture than was put into it. When two pure bred varieties of plants or animals unite to produce offspring, the latter often show many more desirable qualities and characters than the stock from which they were derived. Surely the varieties which man presents in his various ethnic forms would suggest that something more has been produced out of the elements than was originally brought into association (Buck, *The New Year* 217).

Pearl's is a perfect eugenic solution. She extols the result of miscegenation. Laura like Pearl S. Buck reaches the conclusion that hybrid is an improvement upon the originals and should be valued as an example of human's forward march in the process of evolution. It is a symbol of unity rather than of discord and dispute between the progenitors. Kim Christopher and the likes are "a step into future" (Buck, *The New Year* 218) and so is her husband's recognition of his son publicly.

In all the cases of union between people of two races, the most unique example is that of *Mandala*. Brooke Westley is an independent American woman who feels attracted to an Indian Raja. She surrenders herself to him. Despite the fact that she leaves for America to let Jagat be absorbed in his work for the uplift of the poor, she is happy by the fact that she knew someone as Jagat. The intimacy between them seems to be union of two civilisations rather than two individuals.

Pearl S. Buck sensed that human mind can sometimes be very parochial and find the narrowest possible space to define itself from which they exclude others. The human race is divided into different features and skin colours and then into sub races and sub-sub-races. For example the Northern Mongols or Manchurian came from the Northeast of China and established the Qing dynasty by defeating the Ming dynasty in 1644 and ruled China till 1912. Despite being a numerical minority, they ruled China and took a lot of pride in their superiority. In *Imperial Woman*, Orchid a Manchu girl who enters the Forbidden City of the emperors as Yehonala thinks of her destiny with confidence and sets eyes upon the very throne: "She knew her ruling race, the Manchu clans who from their invading ancestors had seized and held power over a mighty people who were Chinese" (Buck, *Imperial Woman* 30).

Geographically, Korea is divided into two: North Korea and South Korea. As described by the novel, the *Noron* or northern people are rugged and revolutionary by nature and are mostly land folks who own land; the *Namin* or southern people are learned and cultivated. In *The Living Reed* this difference

causes a lot of consternation to Sunia as she and her husband belong to Namin and their younger son likes a girl with a northern surname "Choi".

Racial division sometimes imply nationalities also. Nationalities also play a divisive role and are often taken to mark peoples as different. In *Other Gods*, Bert Holm becomes a celebrity in America not only by conquering two of the highest peaks in the Himalayas, but also by outwitting British nationals both the times. Bert Holm as a mechanic under Sir Alfred Fessaday, climbs up the Therat without taking permission of the British boss. In Pangbat conquest, Bert Holm suspects that Burgh, an English man, may outwit Bert Holm and end up avenging his compatriot Sir Alfred Fessaday by playing the same trick that Bert Holm had once played. Bert Holm proves superiority of a younger nation to an old one; of a budding empire to an aging empire. Among many factors, this contributes to his becoming a matter of pride and a hero among the Americans.

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## *Concluding Thoughts*

## Conclusion

Pearl S. Buck is admired and popularly read not only by the Americans but also by many people all around the world. She is among the most translated writers in America. Technically speaking, her novels employ the simple chronological, biblical narrative. Nevertheless, with her, a reader traverses different worlds and times and if s/he is keen enough, s/he observes the various nuances and features of the particular social ethos the writer chooses to talk about. And she happens to talk about two different worlds, the Orient and the Occident without making any sweeping generalisations. Thus her work seems to be kaleidoscopic, talking about the rainbow colours the human planet offers. Her novels depict the socio-economic trajectory of the trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific worlds. The bases of hierarchisation and stratification at an international level power politics as well as in a particular society at a microcosmic level can be read and examined in Pearl S. Buck's fiction.

In an attempt to read Pearl S. Buck's fiction with the sociological concerns of gender, class and race, it emerged clearly that the author is no believer in 'Arts for Art's sake'. Her belief is in pragmatic morality which she tries to bring home with her nonchalant style of writing.

In the analysis of her fictive works, my approach has been eclectic. The three human categories, which provide the theoretical framework, for this fictive criticism, have no narrow theoretical base. It is eclectic and is based on materialist, pragmatic and constructionist perspectives.

Human society is a vast field of study. With the division and hierarchy working at the base of our epistemological processes, the different human categories determine power dynamics among the social members leading to the forms of marginalization subjugation, and oppression that decide the salient features of the world we occupy. The categories develop complex questions with hierarchisation and its justification by the use of different social discourses, e.g. mythology, theology, anthropology and biology et al. Taking up three sociological dimensions that determine the spaces, mental as well as physical, that the social members occupy, I realized that bridging the gap between the social theories and application is not difficult. Gender, class and race are three broad issues that cannot and should not escape the attention of any space-occupant in the human society. While writing about gender, race and class in Pearl S. Buck's fiction in the previous pages, I questioned myself if I was able to see and read that the texts reveal of the time and society they were written in.

The documentation of the nature of a time that saw power struggle and power politics reaching the extreme adrenaline discharge at local and global levels is done in a simple and nonchalant style by Pearl S. Buck. She is not wrapped in layers. Nevertheless, her ambiguity vis-a-vis class matters and her complicating the case-studies with gender and race do not allow reaching any word of finality. She sometimes eludes an attempt to see her final standpoint with regard to the human categories. Working in conjunction with her non-fiction writings and their pragmatic manifestations, reading the novels was not too difficult a task. Reading her novel in isolation also is quite a fun as multiple

interpretations work, contend and clash with each other. The reason are simply her remaining and revelling in conflicts, her attempt to see and understand polarized points of view and her sympathy that excludes none.

A very important point with regard to a study of this kind, taking into account the human categories based on gender, class and race as studied in the novelist concerned is that they tried to defy any attempt at compartmentalization according to one dimension at a time. Sometimes, the matters are just inextricable from each other. Hence, the result is the overlapping discussion.

While trying to discuss one category at a time, I have tried to avoid reduction of the multi-level case-studies just to a function of one category. The focus is to recognize the biggest evil first and declare it the culprit working in combination or isolation of each other. The lesser evil may complicate and aggravate or even alleviate the case. The different forms of marginalisation mostly work in combination.

Gender is a long embattled issue which, like other hierarchical categories demands an expansion of imagination and a suspension of the hierarchy. Neither gender is some content, wherein we put any kind of unequal notions, nor is sex some container whose shape is fixed and molded. I see both as constructs if they are perceived in the way the society does. The biological reality is basically seen as strength or weakness and dirt is translated as defilement. Thus the breaking of the mental schemes is important or the imprisonment is eternal.

Pearl S. Buck's opposition to gender hierarchy is well manifest in all her writings. In her novels she gives voice to the gender victims. Since her concern is

the patriarchal societies, she is found to be criticizing all incarnations of patriarchy. Religious, feudal, capitalist and fascist patriarchies are different forms of patriarchy she deals with in her novels. As a part of a religious and missionary family, she was well aware of the way woman is subjugated and denied fulfillment and transcendence by the religious patriarchs and patriarchy. Her novels expose how the religious ideal of universal brotherhood excludes woman. She reveals how women collude with feudalism and capitalism in order to subjugate others working under them. Women become a tool in continuing suppression and oppression of their own sex-class. The typical American bourgeois women remain in the sty of contentment enjoying doing nothing.

Pearl S. Buck shows her chagrin to the general attitude of man and women both to women and the whole world. She creates characters that are ready to come out of the so-called walls of security and sensitively think and pragmatically work towards making a world that stands on power equilibrium.

Class matters in the fictive world of Pearl S. Buck, as the characters struggle and vie for the acquisition of the forms of capital, namely, economic, cultural and social. The importance of each form of capital depends on how valuably and quickly they convert into symbolic capital. The female characters are trafficked and transacted and valued as a form or repository of capital, sidelined and devalued as objects. At the same time, Pearl S. Buck's fictive world discusses women who are subjects in the social field of power.

The colour of skin or difference in physiognomy in Pearl S. Buck is not taken as a handicap. Her Eurocentric eyes do not lead to a form of albocracy, they

rather see the different colours and hues and shapes as adding to the beauty of the human world. Her characters are not beyond racial prejudice. The west and the east both show their Achilles' heels when it comes to interracial relationships and marriage. From the albocratic imperialism to Asian power rival, all are condemned alike for xenophobic tendencies with a wishful and yet apprehensive exception for her own nation America. She exposes the White power alliance during the time of World Wars, the so-called leaders of the world, with their false sense of superiority and megalomania and their moral turpitude and meanness. Nevertheless, the leanings and actions of America and Americans are under her scrutiny. She is aware of the fact that America is not her utopian answer.

Pearl S. Buck's novels are swift in focalization shift. She tries to break the bubble of White snobbery by describing them from the others' eyes. The Caucasian among whom she includes Indians, the Japanese, the Siamese, the brown and the black all have different types of beauty and beauty parameters which can make the white feel insecure or even prove ugly. She proves the validity of their perspective and make one see the futility of such disdain and exclusion. Nevertheless, in Pearl S. Buck, there is a tendency to exoticise the Oriental physiognomy.

Miscegeny and inter racial relationships are discussed in Pearl S. Buck's novels. The mutual fertility of the races and the fruits of it at the time of mutual hatred, suspicion and jingoism among the nations also pose a big challenge to the civilized nations. Pearl S. Buck tries to sensitise the civilized world of its responsibility towards the children of war. Some of her American characters are

highly irresponsible. Her female characters mostly complement their male counterparts with their sensitivity, conscience and sensitisation. Her novels emphasise the eugenic aspect in the children genetically belonging to different races.

This study tried to handle the topic that needs monumental tasks related to each segment. I still have a sense of insatiety. I find it a misnomer to call this chapter 'conclusion', for I believe that the previous pages that record an attempt to read and analyse Pearl S. Buck's fictive oeuvre, are in no way exhaustive. I think that I have called this chapter conclusion for its being in the end.

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